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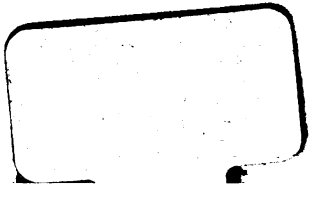

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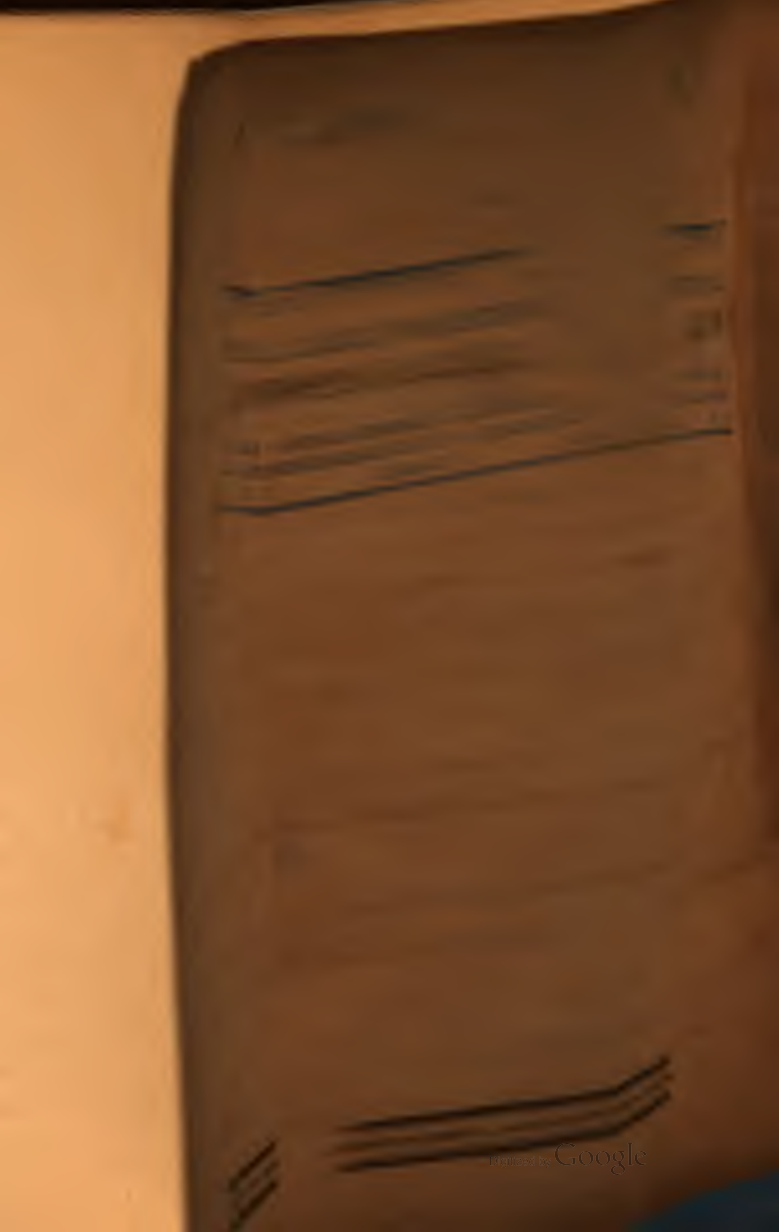
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MEMOIRS

OF

THE LIFE AND MINIST

OF THE LATE

REV. THOMAS SPENCER

OF

LIVERPOOL.

WITH

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING A SELECTION FROM HIS [illegible]

BY THOMAS RAFFLES

[illegible]

[illegible]

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PUBLISHED BY [illegible]

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MEMOIRS

OF

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY

OF THE LATE

REV. THOMAS SPENCER,

OF

LIVERPOOL:

WITH

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING A SELECTION FROM HIS PAPERS, &c.

BY THOMAS RAFFLES,

HIS SUCCESSOR IN THE PASTORAL OFFICE.

Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. *Solomon.*

How many fall as sudden, not as safe! *Young.*

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY CHARLES WILLIAMS.

1813.

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TO THE

CHURCH AND CONGREGATION

LATE UNDER THE PASTORAL CARE

OF THE

REV. THOMAS SPENCER,

THESE

MEMOIRS,

COMPILED AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

AS A TESTIMONY TO THE WORLD

OF

THE ADMIRATION AND ESTEEM HIS GENIUS AND HIS PIETY

UNIVERSALLY INSPIRED;

AND AS

A GRATEFUL MEMORIAL OF HIS ACCEPTABLE LABOURS

AND

TRANSCENDENT EXCELLENCIES,

AS A MINISTER, AS A MAN, AND AS A CHRISTIAN,

ARE

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR AND SINCERE FRIEND,

THOMAS RAFFLES.

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PREFACE.

THE volume now presented to the public, owes its origin to one of those mysterious events in Providence, which seem commissioned, at distant intervals, to alarm and admonish the church of God. A loss so sudden, so awful, so universally deplored, as that of Mr. Spencer, demanded improvement. Many impressive discourses were delivered on the sad occasion, several of which have issued from the press. But his *life* was not less instructive than his *death*; and the more it was contemplated by his friends, the more deeply they felt the importance of rescuing from oblivion those traits of his character, and circumstances of his history, by which their own private circles had been interested. Upon my acceptance of the solemn office from which he was so unexpectedly removed, his bereaved people, anxious to see some authorized memoirs of their beloved pastor embodied and preserved, committed the mournful duty to my hands. My respect for the honoured dead, and attachment to the living, induced me to accept the charge: how I have executed the important trust reposed in me, I must now leave it with a candid public to decide.

Various causes have contributed to create the delay which has attended the publication of the book. It was with considerable difficulty that I collected the materials necessary for my purpose. I had imagined, from the general impression which prevailed, at least amongst Mr. Spencer's friends, of the propriety of such a publication, that information would have been spontaneously offered from

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every quarter whence it might be furnished. But in this I was disappointed; and it was some considerable time from the annunciation of my design, before I was sufficiently supplied to commence, with any degree of prudence, the composition of the volume.

In addition to this, the laborious duties of a new and most extensive charge, conspired often to suspend the prosecution of the work, for the appearance of which I knew many to be anxious, but none more so than myself.

Had I at first anticipated the extent of these Memoirs, I should most probably have shrunk from the undertaking. But the volume has grown almost imperceptibly beneath my hand. What I have recorded of the dear departed is strictly true, so far as the veracity of the most excellent men can warrant the assertion; and whatever opportunity the narrative has afforded of administering instruction I have gladly seized, and conscientiously improved, leaving the issue to a higher agent.

I have at length completed the work; and now, with the deepest humility and diffidence, I resign it to the blessing of God—the consideration of friendship—and the candour of the public. If to those who knew and loved him, it shall sometimes recall, with grateful emotions, the image and the excellencies of their departed friend; if it shall induce any to emulate the bright example of his manly virtues, and his christian graces; or if but one, anticipating or commencing the laborious duties of the christian ministry, shall derive from the contemplation of Spencer's character, instruction, caution, or encouragement—I am amply recompensed—I have not laboured in vain!

THOMAS RAFFLES.

TOXTETH PARK, LIVERPOOL,
February 15th, 1813.

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MEMOIRS, &c.

SELDOM has a task so painfully arduous fallen to the lot of a biographer, as that which, in the mysterious providence of God, has unexpectedly devolved on me. The recollection of departed excellence, which a long series of years had developed and matured, is mingled with a melancholy feeling, and not unfrequently excites the tribute of a tear: but the individual who erects a monument to friendship, genius, usefulness and piety, prematurely wrapt in the oblivion of the grave, must necessarily prosecute his mournful work with trembling hands, and with a bleeding heart. And yet the mind is soothed by the communication of its sorrow; the bosom is relieved of an oppressive burthen while it tells the virtues of the friend it mourns; and the best feelings of the heart are satisfied with the consciousness, that instead of indulging in solitude the luxury of unavailing grief, it has employed its powers to pourtray, in lively colours, for the improvement of the living, the excellencies of the

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beloved and pious dead. For myself, with mournful pleasure, I hasten to sketch the rude outline of one of the loveliest and most finished characters the present age has known;—pausing only to express my deep regret, that one so ripe for heaven, and yet so eminently useful upon earth, should be called from the important sphere he occupied, so soon; and that to hands so feeble should be committed,—together with the solemn trust which he resigned in death, the painful duty of erecting this monument to his worth.

The Reverend Thomas Spencer, was born at Hertford, January 21, 1791.—He occupied the third place out of four who surrounded his father's table, but shared equally with them in the tender and affectionate solicitude of parents, who, placed in the middle sphere of human life, were respectable for their piety, and highly esteemed in the circle in which a wise Providence had allotted them to move. It cannot be expected that any thing peculiarly interesting should mark the early childhood of a youth, retired from the observation of the world, and far removed from the presence of any of those circumstances which might be considered as favourable to the excitation of latent talent or the display of early genius. And yet the years of his infancy and childhood were not undistinguished by some intimations of a superior mind, from which a thoughtful observer might have been induced to augur something of his future eminence, and which his amiable father it appears did with silence watch. He himself observes, in a hasty sketch of his life, which now lies before me,—"As far back as I can recol-

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lect, my memory was complimented by many as being very retentive, and my progress in knowledge was more considerable than that of my school-fellows; a natural curiosity and desire of knowledge, I think I may say, without vanity, distinguished even the period of my infancy. I now remember questions that I asked when about four years old, which were rather singular, and which were confined chiefly to biblical subjects. No child could be more attached to places of worship, or could be more inquisitive about their concerns than myself; and I may add, more given to imitate the actions of the minister and clerk."*

When he had completed his fifth year, he suffered the severest earthly privation a child can know, in the loss of an affectionate mother. Though then too young correctly to appreciate a parent's worth, he deeply felt the stroke; and in the liveliest manner he recalls the impression which at that early period this melancholy circumstance produced upon his tender mind. "When the funeral sermon was preached I could not help noticing the grief which seemed to pervade every person present. Deeply affected myself, I recollect, that after the service, as I was walking about our little garden with my disconsolate father, I said to him, 'Father, what is the reason that so many people cried at the meeting this afternoon.'—He, adapting his language to my comprehension, said, 'They cried to see little children like you without a mother."† This event, which shed so deep a gloom upon his family, seems

* M. S. Memoirs. † Ibid.

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to have excited emotions of a serious nature in his mind never totally effaced.

From this time he applied himself with diligence and delight to the business of his school. There was at this early age something amiable and engaging in his manners; and this combined with his attention to his learning, soon secured the esteem and approbation of his respective teachers, and gained him, together with the first place and highest honours of his school, the character of "*a good boy*." It is pleasing to mark the early combination of superior talent and sweetness of disposition in this extraordinary young man; and it would be well, did the patrons of early genius more deeply ponder the reflection, that the graces of a meek and quiet spirit are far more estimable than the rare qualities of a prematurely vigorous mind; and that the talents they cultivate with such anxious care, if unassociated with real excellence of soul, may render the idols of their fond adulation sources of anguish to themselves and incalculable mischief to mankind.

Whilst a school boy, he became passionately fond of novels, histories, adventures, &c. which he devoured with the greatest eagerness in numbers truly astonishing. The perusal of these he always preferred to play and other amusements adapted to his years. He delighted much in solitude; nor did he know a happiness superior to that of being alone, with one of his favourite books. He took no delight in the games of his companions, nor did he ever mingle in their little feuds. His natural levity,

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however, was excessive; and his wit, fed by the publications he so ardently perused, would often display itself in impurity of language to the laughter and amusement of his fellows. Yet he was not without his moments of serious reflection, and that of a very deep and dreadful kind.—He was often overwhelmed with religious considerations, and the solemn sermons he sometimes heard, filled him with terror and alarm. So intolerable at one period were the horrors of his mind, that in an agony of despair, he was tempted, as many have been before him, to destroy himself.—Thus at an early age he became intimately acquainted with the depravity of his nature; and from the deep waters of spiritual distress through which he was called to pass, his soul imbibed an air of humility and a habit of watchfulness, which enabled him to meet with firmness the dangers of popularity, and to maintain a steady course, notwithstanding the press of sail he carried.

To these deep convictions of his early years may perhaps be traced the peculiarly pressing and empassioned manner of his address, when he strove to arouse the slumbering conscience, or direct the weary wanderer to the cross of Christ.——The sacred poems and the passages of holy writ, which most he loved, were those of a cast similar to that of his own fervent mind; and I have heard many tell, with tears, of the animation and rapture with which he would often repeat from that beautiful hymn of Henry Kirke White, his favourite author, whom in many shades of character he much resembled, and alas! too much in his early and lamented fate—

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Once on the stormy seas I rode,
The storm was loud, the night was dark;
The ocean yawn'd, and rudely blow'd
The wind that toss'd my found'ring bark.

Deep horror then my vitals froze;
Death struck, I ceas'd the tide to stem,
When suddenly a star arose,
It was the star of Bethlehem.

It was my guide, my light, my all,
It bade my dark forebodings cease;
And thro' the storm of danger's thrall
It led me to the port of peace.

Now safely moor'd—my perils o'er,
I'll sing, first in night's diadem,
For ever and for ever more,
The star!—the star of Bethlehem.

The bias and inclination of his mind began at this early period to be disclosed; preachers and preaching seemed to occupy all his thoughts, and often he would exercise himself in addressing such domestic congregations as may be supposed to constitute the usual auditories of an infant. Thus in his earliest childhood he displayed his fond attachment to the Christian Ministry, and the first efforts of his infant mind were directed to that sublime and dignified profession, in which the capacities of his maturer age were so brilliantly displayed. These infantine compositions were not infrequently entirely his own; and when they claimed not the merit of originality, they were derived from hints collected from what he had heard or read. But his *preaching exhibitions* could not long be confined to the narrow circle and scanty congregation his father's house supplied;

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tidings of his early *pulpit talents* soon circulated through the neighbourhood; many were anxious to listen to the instructions of this extraordinary child; and most regarded him, as he himself expresses it, "*a parson in embryo.*"

At this age also he wrote verses. He seems however to have had but a mean opinion of his talent for poetry. It certainly was not the art in which he most excelled. Though an individual may have a power of rhyming sufficient for throwing his feelings into tolerably easy verse, yet something more than this is required in a production which, under the dignified title of a poem, is to meet the public eye. And while most men of an enlightened mind and cultivated taste, have solicited the muses' aid for purposes of private instruction and amusement, and the domestic and social circle have been privileged to share in both, yet it is not necessary to the perfection of the pulpit orator, that he should be an exquisite poet, nor is it at all a detraction from the greatness of his character, that the world should hesitate to pronounce unqualified praise upon poetical effusions, on which the eye or the ear of friendship might linger with delight.

These observations will serve to account for the circumstance, that none of Mr. Spencer's poetical productions are preserved in these pages. And while some partial friends, who saw with pleasure the pieces which circulated in private, may regret for the moment their entire exclusion here, his biographer hopes, that he shall render a more essential service to the memory of his departed friend, by occupying their place, with extracts from his papers of a more solid and interesting kind.

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These early displays of talent however introduced him to the notice and friendship of some individuals of wealth and consequence. This was doubtless considered by himself and his fond parent as no inconsiderable circumstance in the history and prospects of a child, who, if he rose into eminence at all, could have no facilities afforded him, by the auspicious omens of his birth, or the rank of his father's family. But alas! the fond anticipations which from this quarter he cherished, and perhaps with some degree of reason, were not all realized, to the full extent to which his sanguine mind had urged them. It was doubtless well for him, however, that they were not. The disappointments of childhood will give a sober cast to the else too glowing pictures and too anxious hopes of youth; and while they excite a caution in respect to the confidence we should place in the prospects that unfold themselves before us, admirably prepare the mind for the event, when the pledges of friendship lie long unredeemed, and the fair blossoms of hope are blasted and destroyed.

In the mean time he applied himself with surprising diligence to the acquisition of knowledge. In his favourite pursuit he met with the most important aid, from the valuable friendship of the late Rev. Ebenezer White, then the pastor of the Independent Church at Hertford.—For this amiable and pious man, so early lost to the church of Christ,* Mr. Spencer ever cherished and expressed

* Mr. White died Sunday, May 5th, 1811. An interesting memoir of his life (together with his select remains) has been published by the Rev. Joseph Fletcher, A. M. of Black-

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the warmest affection; whilst he survived but a few weeks the melancholy pleasure of paying the last tribute of respect to his beloved remains, and giving utterance to the warm and authorized feelings of his heart, in a most impressive oration at his grave. From Mr. White he learned the rudiments of the Latin tongue; and though the early removal of that gentleman to Chester deprived him of his kind and valuable assistance, yet his father, who had discernment to perceive, and wisdom to foster the unfolding talents of his son, afforded him the means of more ample instruction, by sending him to the best school his native town supplied. Approbation cannot be expressed in language too unqualified of the conduct, in this respect, pursued by the parents of this amiable youth, who though surrounded by every circumstance of a worldly nature to check its progress, yet nobly determined to afford every degree of culture, which such sacrifices as they might be able to make would yield to a mind which promised to rise superior to the obscurity of its birth, and consecrate at some future period no common share of genius to the noblest and the best of causes. Nor must these expressions pass unmingled by regret, that many important accessions are lost to

burn; with a recommendatory preface, by the Rev. Dr. Collyer, of London. In the melancholy but pleasing task of selecting these papers for the press, Mr. Fletcher was originally joined by the subject of these memoirs:—but whilst Mr. Spencer was thus engaged in rearing a monument to the memory of his departed friend—he too was suddenly removed, and it devolved upon the hand of friendship to perform the same office for himself.

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the interests of religion and literature by the neglect of *ignorant*, or the reluctance of *sordid* parents, who in the one case have not the capacity to discover talent, or in the other a disposition, where their worldly circumstances are narrow and scanty, to make any sacrifice of ease on their part, or expected emolument on that of the child, for its cultivation.

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
> The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

At about the age of twelve years, Mr. Spencer considers himself to have become the subject of serious impressions of a deep and permanent kind, and to have felt something experimentally of the power of religion. This most interesting circumstance he simply states in the memoir of his life before referred to, but mentions no particulars respecting the mode in which these impressions were wrought upon his mind, or in what way they operated upon his character, his conduct, and his views. The *general* effect, however, he distinctly records to have been that of heightening his desire of the Christian ministry, for which, it was strongly impressed upon his mind, God had destined him; whilst it reconciled him to his present situation, which was most uncongenial to the bias of his mind, and most unfriendly to the accomplishment of his ardent wishes; for the circumstances of his father's family were at that time of such a nature as to render his assistance necessary between the hours of school, and at length

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compelled his parent, however reluctantly, entirely to remove him. His removal from school, however, was not in consequence of his father's having abandoned the prospect of his one day entering on the work of the ministry, but an act dictated by prudence, which afforded him an opportunity patiently to wait, and calmly to watch the leadings of Providence, and the occurrence of any circumstances which might tend to fix the future destiny of his son. These prudential arrangements, however, were a source of keenest anguish to the mind of Spencer. He bowed at first with reluctance to the yoke of manual labour when but partially imposed —rapidly performed the appointed task, and leaped with joy from toils so repugnant to the elevated and ardent desires of his soul, to solitude and to books; and when compelled entirely to leave his school and pursue from day to day the *twisting of worsted*, which he calls *the worst part of his father's business*, his grief was poignant and his regret severe. But religion, in early life, assumed in him her mildest and most amiable forms. Its characters were those of uncomplaining acquiescence in the will of God, and cheerful resignation to his earthly lot. If, indeed, with patient submission to the arrangements of Providence, he occasionally mingled a warm expression of desire, and suffered his imagination to dwell upon the bright visions of better days, and the animating promise of pursuits more congenial to the tone and inclination of his mind, which hope would give, till, for a moment, it seemed reluctant to return;—it was natural;—nor is it incompatible with the most perfect resignation

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to the divine will thus to dwell on scenes of promised pleasure with delight. Such a combination of light and shade is beautiful in nature; and not infrequently in the history of a Christian's feelings does the sunshine of resignation break in upon the tears of sorrow, and produce a commixture of indefinable feelings, which, like the bow of heaven, are a pledge not unredeemed, of fairer scenery and happier days.

The writer, in thus recording the mingled feelings of his friend, has participated too deeply in circumstances and emotions similar to his, not to do it with the warmth of sympathy. He knows how hard it is to give a cheerful and undivided attention to one pursuit, though less repugnant than mechanical employ, when the heart is intently fixed upon another. Ill does the mind adapt itself to the narrow rules of business, the drudgery of manual labour, or the habits of commerce, when panting after study, devoted to the love of books, or eager to engage in the noblest work that can occupy the powers of man,—the ministry of the gospel:—impressed with a consciousness, that if it is the will of God that the desire enkindled and cherished in the bosom should be fulfilled, some event will transpire to afford facilities and point the way,—but day after day expecting that event in vain, till *hope deferred makes the heart sick*, and all the visions with which she has charmed, seem gradually yielding to the influence of despair. Yet even here, religion has a power to sooth; she sheds the milder influence of resignation, when the glare of hope is gone,—

> "Gives even affliction a grace,
> And reconciles man to his lot."

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He continued working at his father's business and in his father's house, for about a year and a half, anxiously expecting some situation to present itself more congenial to his wishes, but no circumstance arose to interrupt the monotonous sameness of his every day's employ. It seems, however, that he still attended to the cultivation of his mind, and never wholly lost sight of the Christian ministry. Meanwhile business languished, and his father was desirous of seeing him comfortably settled. Their mutual anxiety increasing to impatience, and his father reading on the cover of a Magazine an advertisement for a situation which appeared to be suitable, they set out for London, but upon an interview with the advertiser they found insuperable difficulties in the way, and returned, with disappointment, to Hertford.

Some weeks after this fruitless journey, Mr. Spencer was recommended by a friend to place his son with Messrs. Winwood and Thodey, respectable glovers in the Poultry, who also introduced him to Mr. Thodey's notice. The first interview between the parties was satisfactory; every arrangement was made preparatory to his being bound apprentice, and Thomas soon after entered, in a new capacity, this worthy gentleman's house. The services connected with his new situation, the *better* part of which was far from grateful to the wishes of his heart, still panting for the ministry with unconquerable attachment, were some of them such as his spirit, at first, but reluctantly submitted to perform; yet aware that then the providence of God pointed out no other path, he cheerfully acquiesced and ex-

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changed, not without regret, the calm and tranquil enjoyments of an endeared domestic circle, for the bosom of strangers, the drudgery of a shop, and the bustle of the Poultry.—But here, as formerly at school, his amiable manners—his modest behaviour, and engaging appearance, soon won the affection of the family, (which was large,) whilst his fervent piety and superior talents, excited emotions of a higher order. An extract of a letter, obligingly addressed to me from Mr. Thodey himself, will best record his manner of life, whilst under that gentleman's roof.

"His appearance, his genuine modesty, diligence and integrity, created an interest in our hearts, so as it were almost to identify him as one of our own children; he shared our privileges; united with us in family devotion; and I occasionally took the same opportunities of conversing with him on divine things, which I had been accustomed to do with all those under my care. I well recollect one Sabbath evening, being thus engaged with him alone, when from his pertinent replies to some questions I put to him about the concerns of his soul and the importance of an interest in the Saviour, I perceived he possessed an uncommon share of talent and intellect. This conversation gave me an impressive idea of his general knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel, and I saw in him the traits of a very strong and ardent mind."

Whilst at Mr. Thodey's he conscientiously devoted himself to promote the interests of his employers, notwithstanding his natural aversion to business. He even became peculiarly attached to the

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family, and receiving from them tokens of affectionate attention, superior to any thing he had a right to expect, and of which he always spoke with gratitude, he became as happy as the circumstances of his lot could possibly allow him to be. He formed an acquaintance with several pious young men, who, though rather above his station, did not hesitate to respect genius and religion, even in a lad of inferior rank in life. Several times, also, he exercised his preaching talents at the house of a relation of the young man who was then his fellow servant, but was afterwards a student in the same academy with himself, and is now a useful minister of the gospel.*

He describes the exercises of his mind and the mode in which he passed his time, during his residence in the Poultry, with great simplicity and feeling.

"At this place my time was entirely employed, as it was fit it should be, in executing the will of my two masters; for the young man, who was active and friendly, I formed a great attachment, and was indeed interested in the welfare of the whole family. Marks of respect were shown me, which were I believe unusual to any of my predecessors. I made myself upon the whole tolerably comfortable; some difficulties and disagreeable circumstances of course fell to my lot, yet upon the whole I had many enjoyments. My acquaintance, whilst here, increased:

* The Rev. Thomas Heward, of Clare, to whom I cheerfully take this opportunity of publicly rendering my thanks for several interesting letters of Mr. Spencer's, which will appear in these pages.

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with several young men, who indeed were rather above my station in life; I was particularly intimate, and more than twice or thrice did I give an exhortation at the house of a relative of the young man's, who was my fellow-servant. The opportunities I had of hearing the word were very delightful, and a higher relish was given to them by the toils and business of the week."*

To youth who may be placed in similar circumstances with the amiable subject of these memoirs, his mild and cheerful deportment in scenes so uncongenial to the bias of his mind, should prove a salutary and impressive lesson. Impatience and fretfulness are but ill adapted to the furtherance of any design, and a disposition to murmur, under the arrangements of our present lot, marks a state of mind most unfriendly to the patient sufferance of the toils, the anxieties and the disappointments inseparably connected with the ministerial life; and whilst it is an obvious fact, that every young man possessed of piety cannot be employed as a preacher of the gospel, to such as conceive themselves endowed with talents for that solemn office, and yet are placed in circumstances, which seem to forbid the indulgence of a hope they still cherish with an anxious pleasure;—to such, the subsequent history of Mr. Spencer, will afford another striking proof, in an innumerable series,—that where God has actually called and qualified an individual for the ministry, he will, in his own time and by unexpected methods, make the path of duty plain before that individual's

* M. S. Memoirs.

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feet. Let no one, then, rashly attempt to break the connected chain of opposing circumstances by which his providence may have surrounded him; but rather wait in patience till the hand that has thus encircled him opens up a passage, and by events, which may justly be considered as intimations of the divine will, invites him to advance.

These remarks, the result of frequent observations on the ways of God in cases similar to this, not improperly connect the future scenes of Mr. Spencer's life, with those we have already contemplated. For the time was now arrived, that the cloud which had hovered over his future prospects should be dissipated, and another path,—a path to which he had from infancy directed his attention with fond anticipation and intense desire, present its varied and momentous objects of pursuit for the cheerful, but, alas! the short-lived exercise of his superior powers. After a residence of about four months with his employers in the Poultry, circumstances occurred of such a nature as to render his services no longer necessary, on which account he left London and returned for awhile to his parents at Hertford; but some time previous to the event which caused his departure from London, he had been introduced to the notice of Thomas Wilson, Esq. the benevolent and indefatigable Treasurer of the Academy for educating young men for the work of the ministry, at Hoxton. Mr. Wilson perceived in him piety and talents far above his years. His whole appearance and his engaging manners excited in that gentleman's breast, an interest in this amiable youth, which he never lost, and he gave it

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as his decided opinion, (without elating him with a hope, of the ultimate failure of which, there was still a probability,) that his views should in some way or other be directed towards the ministry.

This revolution in Mr. Spencer's affairs was not unnoticed or unimproved by Mr. Wilson, who wisely regarding it as a favourable opportunity for carrying into effect those generous designs respecting him, which from their first interview he had cherished, sent for him; conversed with him upon the subject, and introduced him to the Rev. William Hordle, of Harwich, a gentleman to whose care some of the young men were committed, whose youth or other circumstances did not allow of their immediate entrance into the Academy, though they were considered as proper objects of its patronage. To this gentleman, at length, Mr. Wilson proposed to send Mr. Spencer for trial of his talents and piety, and for preparatory studies; a proposition to which Mr. Spencer acceded with unfeigned gratitude and joy. The time fixed for his entrance into Mr. Hordle's family was January, 1806. The interval between this period and that of his departure from the Poultry, which was in October, 1805, he spent in his father's house, and for the most part in his father's business. Though this was repugnant to his feelings, he had yet learned, by five months' absence, in the bustle of a shop in the city, to appreciate the calm and tranquil pleasures of a domestic circle, to which he became more endeared as the lovely qualities of his mind unfolded, and the dignified and pleasing prospects of his future life were disclosed. But though considerable light was thrown upon his

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destiny, yet on leaving London it was not finally determined; and this pressed with peculiar weight upon his spirit, which, susceptible of the slightest emotion, must have deeply felt in leaving one scene of action, the uncertainty which as yet partially veiled from him that which should succeed. Of the day of his departure he thus writes:—"I anticipated it with mingled emotions; a strong desire to see my father, mother, brother and sisters, a sensation of sorrow at parting with my old friends, and the idea of uncertainty as to my future engagements in life, equally affected me. Although I had been absent from home but five months, the desire I had again to see Hertford was very great, nor do I suppose I shall often spend more pleasant evenings than the first one I spent at home, after the first time of being absent for any considerable season; two or three days were spent in seeing other relations and friends, till—."*

Here the narrative, first referred to, and often quoted, written by his own hand, and evidently for his own use, abruptly closes; and here for a moment his biographer will pause.——It is a charming domestic piece, which the hand of his departed friend, obedient to the warm and vivid recollections of his fervent mind, has sketched; but scarcely has he pictured to himself the countenances of that interesting group which gathered around him again to bid him welcome to his father's house, and committed the rude outline to his paper, than he is suddenly called off, and lays down the recording pen for

* M. S. Memoirs.

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ever! So did his life abruptly terminate; but the mysterious voice that summoned him from his endeared connexions upon earth introduced his emancipated spirit to the bosom of a happier family above—not another family, but one most intimately connected with his own, for which whilst here he cherished such a warm affection. The sentiment this sentence breathes was familiar to himself, and often seen in the energy and fervour with which he would repeat these admirable lines of Kelly:—

One family, we dwell in him;
One church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.

One army of the living God,
To his command we bow;
Part of the host have cross'd the flood,
And part are crossing now.

Ten thousand to their endless home
This awful moment fly;
And we are to the margin come,
And soon expect to die.

Dear Jesus, be our constant guide;
Then when the word is giv'n,
Bid death's cold stream and flood divide
And land us safe in heav'n.

At Harwich Mr. Spencer was completely in his element. He commenced the year 1806 in Mr. Hordle's family, and was then about completing the fifteenth of his own life. At this interesting age, when the powers of the mind begin rapidly to unfold,—when a tone is often given to the future cast

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of thought, and sentiments and habits are imbibed and formed, which constitute the basis or become the germ of the matured and finished character;—it was a circumstance peculiarly auspicious in the history of this lamented youth, that he was introduced to the pious and enlightened care of such a man as Mr. Hordle. In his preaching, in his lectures, and in his conversation, he saw most admirably applied, those elementary principles of theological science, the scholastic forms of which must else have been unintelligible or insipid to his mind. In the liberal and sacred current of his habitual thought, Mr. Spencer would find a safe channel for the yet infant stream of his own conceptions; whilst he would imperceptibly form his character upon that mild, correct, and amiable model, constantly before him.

It must be of incalculable advantage to a young man destined for the Christian ministry, as it evidently was to our departed Spencer, to pass a year or two beneath a faithful and enlightened pastor's roof,—to be a spectator of his toil,—a daily witness of the varied scenes of duty and of trial which the Christian ministry perpetually presents. It is true, that in academies, lectures on the pastoral care are read, and discourses on the duties of the Christian ministry delivered; but one week of actual observation must impress more deeply on the mind all that such lectures can contain, and unnumbered other circumstances, equally important, but which no general analysis can include, than months or years of the most devoted study. And to the diligent improvement of this peculiar advantage, perhaps, may in part be attributed that early maturity at which

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Mr. Spencer's capacity for the sacred office had arrived. He had the seriousness, the reflection of the *pastor* while but a *student;* and when he actually entered on that holy office, the exercises of the pulpit, and the habits of his ministerial life, bespoke the knowledge of long experience, rather than of recent theory, and indicated the presence of a *master's*, not a *learner's* hand.

At Harwich his diligence was exemplary: a judicious course of reading was marked out for him by his respected tutor, which he conscientiously and unweariedly pursued; but besides this, he had the use of an excellent library, with rich supplies from which he amply occupied his leisure hours. He had made considerable progress in the Latin; and soon after his introduction to Mr. Hordle, he commenced, under his direction, the study of the Hebrew. With this sacred language he was particularly pleased, and soon demonstrated his attachment and his diligence, by completing, with considerable labour, an abridgment of Parkhurst's Hebrew Lexicon. This work he accomplished in a small pocket manual, which proved of considerable use to him, and was almost his constant companion.*

Here, too, he first became acquainted with the principles of Moral Philosophy; and whilst from the lectures of Doddridge, and the essays of Locke,

* Of this Manual he made two fair copies, one of which is in possession of his tutor, and the other is amongst the papers from which these Memoirs are supplied. The design is honourable to his judgment, and the execution to his perseverance and his accuracy at that early age.

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his mind derived vigour and energy; from the study of the Latin poets, and the classic authors of our own country, it gained amusement, and his compositions gradually assumed an air of elegance and ease.

But not only in literature and science was his progress conspicuous during his residence at Harwich; but he also made considerable advances in the knowledge and experience of divine things. That in the midst of all his studies, which yet he pursued with diligence and ardour, religion was the object of his chief regard and dearest to his heart, is evident from the uniform strain of his letters to his most intimate and beloved friend Mr. Heward, whose fellow labourer he had been at Mr. Thodey's, and the privation of whose society he seemed deeply to deplore. His views of the Christian ministry became more and more consistent, and the impression of its vast importance more deep and solemn on his mind. The intense desire with which he panted for that sacred and honourable office became tempered, though never checked, by an awe of its vast responsibility, and a consciousness of incapacity for the full discharge of its numerous and laborious duties.

With Mr. Hordle he would sometimes indulge in the most free and unreserved converse on the state of his heart, and his private walk with God. In such conversations he was always much affected, and susceptible, from the constitution of his nature, of the most delicate impressions and the keenest feelings, it may be well supposed that in religion he would *deeply* feel. Hence the tenderness of his conscience, and the susceptibility of his mind, would often overwhelm his bosom with convictions of guilt,

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and agitate him with unnumbered inward conflicts. Yet in the midst of all he evidently grew in spiritual strength—his mind acquired confidence—his principles became daily more and more confirmed—and he had advanced far in a deep and experimental acquaintance with the ways of God at an age when such advancement is rarely to be found.

Whilst at Harwich he regularly shared with Mr. H. the pleasing duty of conducting the devotions of the family, and frequently performed the sacred service with an enlargement of heart, a fervour and propriety of expression truly astonishing. But this was a circumstance he particularly wished should be concealed; his modesty and diffidence shrunk from the observation of men, even of his nearest friends; and in one of his letters to his friend* he writes, "My situation is comfortable, more so than ever; I am considered like one of the family; of an evening I generally, by Mr. H.'s desire, engage in family prayer, he in the morning. *O tell it to nobody on any account.* When he is out I always do."

To those who knew not the beloved original, the outlines of whose character these pages but imperfectly present, the detail of minute particulars may be uninteresting and insipid; but those who were familiar with him will dwell with pleasure on the faintest lineament that may be here preserved of a dear departed friend, so ardently, so deservedly esteemed; whilst a combination of these varied and retired beauties may form a portrait on which the eye of a stranger may dwell with admiration, and

* Mr. Heward.

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the mind reflect with profit. It is in confidence of this that his biographer pauses to record another and a pleasing trait in his character at this early age—the peculiar warmth and constancy of his friendship. He seems, indeed, at this period to have had but one bosom friend, except those of his own immediate family; to him his letters breathe an affection the most glowing, spiritual, and pure; and perhaps no little incident more strikingly displays the tender cast of his mind than that which he himself relates, with great simplicity, in a letter to his friend:—

"This morning we read (Mr. H. and myself) the second night of Young's Night Thoughts—the very place that treats of friendship; I was rather affected at the reading of it; and after it was finished, and we were alone, I told him (Mr. H.) I was no stranger to Young's sentiments in that place. He asked me 'if I had lost any friends?' I told him no—not by death. He asked me 'if I had by treachery?' O no, Sir. 'How then?' *Only by separation!*"

Thus in pleasant and familiar intercourse with one for whom he mingled veneration with affection, and of whom he never ceased to speak with all the rapturous energy of gratitude and filial love—in exercises and pursuits every way adapted to satisfy his ardent thirst of knowledge—in scenes and in society congenial to the tone and bias of his mind—in conscientious preparation for closer studies and severer labour, previous to his entrance on that sacred office long the object of his choice—and in

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deep communion with himself and God—did he pass the allotted period of his stay at Harwich.

As the term (a year) fixed for his residence with Mr. Hordel drew towards its close, his anxiety considerably increased; he anticipated, with regret, a departure from scenes and society so much endeared to him; and the trial through which he was to pass previous to his admission into the academy at Hoxton, when viewed in connexion with his youth, excited in his mind considerable apprehension and dread. But the hope of success never entirely abandoned him; whilst the pleasing prospect of being again associated with his friend, who had by this time entered as a student in the same academy, tended not a little to gladden and animate his heart.

In November he drew up a statement of his religious experience, his views of theological truth, and his reasons for desiring the Christian ministry, according to a standing order of the academy with respect to young men proposing themselves as candidates for its patronage. These papers, written in a style of dignified simplicity, and disclosing a knowledge and experience of divine things, which in a youth, scarcely sixteen years of age, must have excited the admiration of all to whom they were submitted,—were duly presented to the committee, and passed, though not without some difficulty, arising from his age; but the extraordinary qualifications he appeared to possess, and the strong recommendations of his friend and tutor, Mr. Hordle, overcame this obstacle, and the 5th of January following was appoint-

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ed for his personal appearance before the constituents of that institution, in order to give them a specimen of his talents for public speaking.

Mr Spencer left Mr. Hordle's family on the 18th of December, and spent the interval of time between his departure from Harwich and the day of his examination at Hoxton (which was postponed to the 7th of January) at his father's house a Hertford.

Whose imagination does not follow this beloved youth into the bosom of his family again; who does not picture to himself the charming scenes of social and domestic joy his presence would inspire. With what tenderness and affection would his venerable father bid him welcome to his paternal home again; with what delight would he gaze upon the animated features of his countenance, smiling in all the ingenuousness of youth; while with nobler feelings of delight he marked the unfolding graces of his mind, saw his improvement in the best of sciences—religion, and beheld him daily growing in favour both with God and man. With what adoring gratitude would they retrace together the scenes of his childhood, and the many alarming obstacles which once almost forbad the indulgence of a hope that the object of their ardent wish would ever be obtained; and how, in the transport of those happy hours, would his family anticipate for him they loved, in the future stages of an honourable ministry, years of usefulness and comfort. Ah! pleasing visions never to be realized! Little did that interesting group conceive that it was his appointed lot but just to taste the joys and sorrows of a pastor's life, and then expire. Already they had seen

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the bud swelling with fulness—teeming with life; now they beheld the blossom, and admired its beauty; and they thought long to gaze upon the promised charms of the unfolded flower; happy strangers of the melancholy and mysterious fact, that so soon as it had opened it must be suddenly cut down and die! But such and so frail is man—"*In the morning they are like grass that groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withereth.*"—Psalm xc. 5, 6. Such and so uncertain is human life—"*It is even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*"—James iv. 14.

At this interesting period of Mr. Spencer's life it will be perhaps gratifying to the reader to pause, and gain a more familiar acquaintance with him, than can be supplied by a narration of events and circumstances in his history, by perusing some extracts from his correspondence and other papers, which will throw much light upon the formation of his character, and afford a pleasing specimen of his early genius.

I have now before me a packet of letters addressed to his friend Mr. Heward, dated at various periods, from October, 1805, to December, 1806. Though at the commencement of this correspondence he had not attained his 15th year, these letters breathe a spirit of the purest piety, and often express sentiments by which age would not be dishonoured, in a style remarkably correct and vigorous. But the reader shall participate with me in the pleasure which the perusal of this interesting correspondence—this simple and unaffected utterance of early piety and friendship, has afforded me.

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No. 1.

Hertford, Oct. 16, 1805.

"——— As for the manner in which I have and do employ my time: my father employs me either in writing or in his business, more than I expected. What leisure time I do have, which is but little, I employ in reading, writing, and meditation. I hope he will not press upon me that employment which I dislike, but which however I have been engaged in.

"Mr. Wilson wrote a letter to my father, the substance of which is as follows: he informs him that if it is possible he will get a minister to take me, in order to see more of my piety and talents; and hopes that it will be agreeable for me to be at home with my father till Christmas.

"These are the circumstances under which I am now placed. I know it is my duty to be submissive and resigned to the will of God, but this is a lesson which, like all others, is to be learned at the cross of Christ: 'tis there alone, my dear friend, we can study all heavenly graces and duties———."

.....

It is pleasing to observe with what deep seriousness of mind he conducted those favourite exercises in exhortation and in preaching, before referred to,* and with what humility and even thankfulness he listened to the animadversions of any who were disposed to criticise. In another part of the same letter he says—

* See page 21.

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"——— I am not without hope, that I shall praise and adore a blessed God, for the ill opinions those persons formed of me, who heard me preach at Mr. T———'s. Methinks I cannot be thankful enough to you for informing me of it. It has I trust made me more watchful and prayerful than before, that I may be accounted righteous not in the sight of men, but in the view of a sin-avenging God. Thus we may see a little of the dealings of Providence with his children. When he distresses them in any way he does it for their good. *All things*, saith the inspired Apostle, *work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose.*—Since that evening I have felt a little more comfort in my own mind re ecting eternal things. God forbid it should be a false peace. Hope you keep close to a throne of grace in personal prayer. 'Tis from thence we are to draw all our comfort; 'tis there we can get a soul-transforming spiritual view of Jesus; 'tis from thence we get every necessary weapon, wherewith to combat our spiritual enemies.

"So often called away to attend to different things, like you I cannot say I have written such a letter as I could wish. If I should be placed under a minister, I think I should have more opportunity for writing long letters.—However, let us, whenever an opportunity offers, write to each other. Such love as ours is not easily quenched. Let us then manifest it by writing to each other, so as to stir up one another to the exercise of every Christian grace. Still let us keep our eye upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and be constantly concerned to honor his

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holy name, by a consistent walk and conversation. Then shall we meet to part no more, and dwell forever with our Jesus, in upper, better, brighter worlds.

"The soul that on Jesus has lean'd for repose,
He will not, he cannot, desert to his foes:
That soul tho' all hell should endeavour to shake,
He'll *never, no never, no never* forsake."

.....

Soon after it was determined that he should go to Harwich for a twelvemonth, he wrote again to his friend Mr. Heward, and the following extract from his letter, shows the humble, grateful, and devotional habit of his mind:—

No. 2.

Hertford, Nov. 12, 1805.

"——— I join with you in saying, 'how wonderful are God's ways.' We indeed little thought that Mr. H. was the person under whom I should be instructed, when we were at Hoxton, hearing him preach, or I, when I breakfasted with him: at the same time, I cannot forbear adoring that favour which is shown to me from God: ME who am utterly unworthy of the least of all God's mercies. Goodness and mercy have hitherto followed me, and, I doubt not, will through life. May that goodness which was so gloriously displayed in the salvation of sinners, and that mercy which has snatched so many brands from the burning, be our conso-

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lation all through life—our joy in death—and the burden of our song to all eternity."

.....

The following observations are worthy of a much older pen, and display a judgment and discretion, rather unusual in a lad, not yet fifteen years of age.

No. 3.

November 13.

"You informed me in your last, that your desires for the work of the ministry had not at all abated. I sincerely wish that they may be fulfilled, and that you and I may be fellow labourers in the Lord's vineyard. God certainly can do this for us; let us pray that he may. You still appear dubious of your own ability for that important work. I would have you consider, that God works by whom he will work. He has many ministers in his church, real sent ministers, who have not those great gifts that distinguish many of his servants; and not only so, but these men have often been the means of doing more good than those of great talents—and what is the reason of this? *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,*—is all that we must say. And you, my worthy friend, should also remember, that as yet, you cannot form any idea of your own abilities. As I have often told you, when I lived with you, I doubt not your abilities, when improv-

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ed by application to study, &c. will be as fit for that employ, (if the will of God) as any other. God, you know, in every thing acts as a sovereign: '*I will work, and who shall let it,*' is his language—will work by the feeblest means, and the weakest instruments. I hope you will still be kept low in your own eyes, for that, I am sure, is one quality, or rather property, of a gospel minister. At our best estate we are altogether vanity, and less than nothing. May the Lord keep us all truly humble. Luther used to say, there were three things made a minister—affliction, meditation, and prayer: that is, sanctified affliction, scriptural meditation, and earnest prayer; in which last particular I hope you are perpetually engaged. Pray, my dear friend, for direction of God—pray for grace, which is of more value, by far, than great gifts, and say in the language of resignation, hope, and faith—'*Here am I, Lord, send me to labour in thy vineyard.*' You have appealed to me in saying, 'You well know, I shall never rely on my own strength for success and usefulness.'—I know you will not, (at least whilst in your present mind) and I pray that God would keep you still so determined. Let us then pray, that we may both of us be made able, useful, and humble ministers of the New Testament.

"——— I am glad to find, that you generally hear three times a day. Young men, who wish to be ministers, cannot hear too much of the gospel, provided they are anxious to improve on what they do hear———."

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I shall present the reader with nearly the whole of the following letter; and I think, that few will be found, on the perusal, who deem it unworthy of preservation. It contains a pleasing grateful (and the more pleasing as it is entirely uninfluenced) tribute to the memory of departed worth—discloses the deep attention and care with which its writer was, at that early age, accustomed to hear and reflect upon sermons, and shews how incessant and uniform was the panting of his heart for the Christian ministry.

No. 4.

Hertford, Nov. 18, 1805.

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"I expected to have heard from you before now, but as I have not, it becomes me to bear the disappointment with fortitude and resolution, hoping that it will not be long before I have a few lines from you. On Saturday last, I heard that, that good and worthy man Mr. Winwood was dead. It will, I doubt not, be a great stroke to the family; but I am well assured, that to him death was eternal gain. Truly, *the righteous hath hope in his death.* May you and I both be found at the last day on the right hand of the Judge with our respected master! While he is tuning his harp to the praises of a precious Jesus, we have to combat with many enemies; we have many trials to pass under

Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets!*

* Alas! lamented youth! little did he, or the friend to whom he wrote, imagine how few his trials—how short

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We shall, I am persuaded, feel our own depravity in many instances here below, ere we join with him in everlasting songs above; but if we are enlisted under the banners—the blood-stained banners of the cross, we shall certainly arrive there. Let us then seek, earnestly seek, after the one thing needful; and whilst earthly objects vanish and decay in our estimation; nay, whilst the world dies daily in our view, and its perishing things appear in their proper light—may we feel our hearts panting after the wells of salvation—our souls, with all their faculties, engaged in the noblest of all undertakings—our feet running in the good ways of God—our tongues making mention of his righteousness, and of his only—in short, may we be crucified to the world—risen with Christ—and transformed into his divine image and likeness. This, I trust, I can say is my desire, and I know it is the earnest wish of my dear friend.

"Sabbath-day, Nov. 15th, I heard Mr. M——, at Cowbridge, in the morning, from 1 Thes. v. 8. '*But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation.*' He first shewed what was implied in Christians being of the day; secondly, enforced the exhortation of the text.

his warfare should prove—and how soon the pious desire of his heart should be, as it respected himself, fulfilled: such and so mysterious are the ways of God—Spencer is early summoned to his rest, but his companion is left, still to maintain the conflict, whilst he mourns his loss—"*two men shall be in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left.*"—Matthew xxiv. 40.

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To be of the day, he said, implied—1. a state of knowledge; 2. safety; 3. comfort, &c. In enforcing the admonition, he exhorted them to the exercise of faith and love; gave them good grounds for hope; and shewed that these three graces had a tendency to comfort and strengthen believers. In the afternoon, from Acts xvii. 30, 31. '*The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead!*' He considered—1. the certainty of a future judgment; 2. the person of the Judge; 3. the circumstances of the day; 4. the necessity of repentance inferred from the text. He, indeed, is a worthy man, and appears well suited for a missionary. In the evening I heard Mr. L——, at the Chapel, from John iii. 14. '*For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,*' &c. He said many good things, and is very earnest in the good cause. Last Lord's day we had Mr. M—— again; text in the morning, Heb. vi. 11. '*And we desire, that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.*' He considered—1. the thing mentioned—the full assurance of hope; 2. shewed that it might be attained; 3. exhorted them to diligence in aspiring after it. Time and room forbid me to make any remarks upon the sermon (which was a good one) in the afternoon, from Acts xvi. 9. '*And then stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying, come over and help us.*' In discoursing on it, he

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shewed—1. that the heathens want help; 2. that it is the duty of ministers and people to give it them; and 3. that men should exert themselves for the purpose. It appeared like a collection sermon; and he went afterwards and got a little money of a few friends at Hertford, for the mission to China.

"In the evening, having been previously invited, I went at six o'clock to Mr. K———'s, to see the minister. I was there during family worship; and after that, Mr. M. and self went up stairs to talk a little together. He asked me about my learning, &c. then how long I had been seriously disposed, &c. He appeared satisfied with my answers, and asked me if I was not going into the country; I told him 'yes.' He asked me if I should have an opportunity of attending to my books there. This naturally led to the whole affair: he seemed glad, and asked me if I designed to be a minister in this country. I told him I wished to be quite resigned to the will of Providence in that matter. He gave me some good advice; and then we knelt down, and he engaged in a short and affectionate prayer. I was much affected with the advice, conversation, and prayer.

"——— I am sensible that your attachment to me is as unshaken as ever. I hope you pray that both of us may be made ministers of the gospel; and, in some future day, have our wishes respecting that completely fulfilled. I am very desirous that you may be shortly placed in a situation in which you will have more leisure for reading, writing, studying, &c. *O that you were going with me to Harwich.* Still continue to pray

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for one who feels his own unworthiness for the service of his God, and yet wishes to be an instrument of doing great good to souls: and if I should not be very successful in my ministry, methinks it would be reward enough to have laboured for God, and not to have been employed in the drudgery of Satan."

.....

The next letter, to the same correspondent, contains a specimen of his talent for the composition of sermons at that age. It affords a pleasing proof of his early skill in the practice of an art, in which he eventually so much excelled.

No. 5.

Hertford, Dec. 3, 1805.

"——I have sent you my thoughts upon (or rather my way of discussing) that text Mr. Knight preached from. I hope your candour will excuse imperfections. I never read any thing upon it, and it is the production of a boy.

MATTHEW v. 20.

"*For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*"

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GENERAL HEADS.

1st.—EXPLAIN THE NATURE OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES.

2d.—SHEW IN WHAT RESPECTS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS MUST EXCEED THEIRS.

3d.—NOTICE THE CONSEQUENCES OF POSSESSING A RIGHTEOUSNESS NO BETTER THAN THEIRS.

1st HEAD.—EXPLAIN THE NATURE, &c.

It was self-righteousness.—Luke xviii. 9.

1st.—*This righteousness is founded in ignorance*

Of God's nature,

Of the spirituality of his law,

Of the deceitfulness of the heart,

And of the true method of salvation.

2d HEAD.—SHEW IN WHAT RESPECTS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS SHOULD EXCEED THEIRS.

The righteousness here termed 'yours' is the righteousness of Christ, which becomes ours by imputation, in the same manner as our sins became Christ's. This righteousness thus becoming ours, exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees,

1st.—*In its origin.* It is divine—the other human, or Satanic; as we doubt not, Satan first infused self-righteous thoughts into the minds of men, &c.

2d.—*Its nature and particular properties.*

This righteousness

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Delivers us from bondage,
Saves us from sin,
Gives us holiness of life,
Makes us victorious in death,
Joyful in judgment, and
Happy through all eternity.

The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees cannot do this.

But our Lord might also allude to that righteousness which is implanted in us, as well as that which is imputed to us, and that far exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees in its effects, which are real good works, which

Spring from a good motive,
Are directed to a good purpose,
And have a good end.

These works are not meritorious, but serve for the justification of our faith, not of our persons, and they far exceed the legal performances of the self-righteous.

3d HEAD.—NOTICE THE CONSEQUENCES OF POSSESSING A RIGHTEOUSNESS NO BETTER THAN THEIRS.

Ye shall in no case enter into, &c.

1st.—Here we must necessarily dwell a little upon *the nature of the kingdom of heaven.*—Consider

1. The person of the King.
2. The happiness of the subjects.
3. The eternal duration of his reign, &c.

2d.—*How dreadful a thing to be shut out of this kingdom.*

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3d.—*How peculiarly striking is the language of the Saviour—ye shall in no case, &c.*

Notwithstanding all your professions, long prayers, alms givings, &c. '*Ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*'

From this subject we draw a few inferences.

1.—We may learn from hence, *the evil nature of sin.* If all *self-righteousness* be so bad, what must *unrighteousness* be?

2.—We here see *the only true method of salvation*—the righteousness of Christ.

3.—How necessary is *daily, serious self-examination,* in order to ascertain to which class we belong.

4.—We likewise infer *the necessity of prayer,* for instruction and grace.

5.—*How dreadful is the case of the self-righteous character.*

6.—*The believer may hence draw some comfort.* He is interested in Jesus Christ, and shall outride all the storms and troubles of life, sing the dear name of Jesus in the hour of death, and stand unmoved amidst the jarring elements, 'the wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds.'

"May the God of hope bless us both—fill us with all joy and peace in believing—enlarge our spiritual coast—give us to see more and more of the sinfulness of our nature—the depravity of our hearts—the imperfection of our graces—the smallness of our knowledge—the sufficiency of Jesus—the stability of our hope—the fulness of Christ. May he give us to see that our names are written in heaven—may he brighten up our evidences for glory—

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establish our faith—enlarge our desires—and give us hungerings and thirstings after righteousness. May we enjoy the blessings of salvation—the sweetness of communion with God—the peace bought and purchased for us by Christ Jesus—and that joy in the Holy Ghost, produced by his influences—and may we learn more and more of the heights, lengths, depths, and breadths of the love which passeth knowledge. May we dwell together in that happy land, where none but the righteous can enter, and where our worship shall be undisturbed.

"And now, my dear brother, I commend you to the hands of that God who doth all things well, and who taketh care of those who put their trust in him; and hoping soon to hear from you, I subscribe myself,

"Your truly affectionate friend,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

N. B. "Remember me to ——. Pray for me, and may the Lord bless you. Amen."

No. 6.

Hertford, December 31, 1805.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I think myself very happy in having such a friend as you prove yourself to be. I know affection towards me is too deeply rooted in you ever to be erased by separation. Life's greatest blessing is a well chosen friend, and I do feel it so. You cannot imagine (only by your own feelings) what pleasure I take in recollecting past scenes,

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and recalling to the mind occurrences relating only to us, which never shall be forgotten. I hope we have the same 'friend that sticketh closer than a brother.' I am affected, peculiarly affected, when I read the solemn confessions you make of depravity, &c. You know Paul acknowledged himself the chief of sinners. When, therefore, you are oowed down under a sense of sin, *look unto Jesus*, there only salvation is to be found for those who, like you, are sensible of sin. But I verily believe my friend has already been washed in the fountain of his blood. Yes, I doubt not but you have passed from death unto life, and are called according to God's eternal purpose; therefore, instead of writing bitter things against yourself, rejoice in Christ Jesus whilst you have no confidence in the flesh.—Ah! my friend, you know not fully how I have lifted up my puny arm in rebellion against God; so that I cannot think myself a whit behind the chief of sinners. Young as I am, I am a great sinner; but blessed be God who has, I hope, given us both a good hope through grace: to him be all the glory.

"I shall, I expect, be in town a day sooner than was intended, viz. Wednesday the 8th; my father will not come till the next day. Mr. F———, in his letter, mentions a desire that I would give them a lecture *(in the old way)* at his house in the evening. I am very willing to do it, and I hope we shall have your company."

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No. 7.

Hertford, January 3, 1806.

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"With the greatest pleasure I received and read your kind but short letter; but I must not speak about its shortness, as mine must be as short, if not shorter, as I expect S—— to come for it directly.—Mr. Davies's Sermon entitled, 'The Midnight Hour,' I understand, is printed. How glad I should have been to have heard it. I hope when I am in town you will remember your promise, and not forget the greatest part of the sermon, as you know how I respect (and like the preaching of) that worthy man.* I hope you will have a pleasant and profitable day next Sabbath at Finchley. I am afraid you cannot get out next Thursday, the day Nelson is buried; for I do assure you that your presence at any place in town would afford me more pleasure than the sight of his funeral, to which I do not intend to go. I have been with Samuel a little about Hertford. I have read what I wanted in Washington's Life, or rather his History of American Wars, as I do not see so much of Washington in it as I expected. I cannot add more; but remain your very affectionate friend,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

* The Rev. Mr. Davies, of Queen-Street, Cheapside, London.

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His next letter is from Harwich, and contains a pleasing disclosure of the state of his mind on the accomplishment, so far, of his ardent wishes.

No. 8.

Harwich, February 6, 1806.

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"I with pleasure embrace the opportunity which now offers itself of writing you a few lines for the first time since I have been here. While I hope you enjoy your health, I can say I never was better in my life than I have been since I have been at Harwich. The air is very cold and healthy: I am sure I have felt the difference. In the town there are many inhabitants, and a Methodist place besides Mr. Hordle's: by Methodists, I mean Wesley's people. Mr. Hordle preaches three times on a Sabbath day, and is very well attended, and on Wednesday evenings; prayer meeting on Monday night. I doubt not but you will join with me in returning thanks to the all-wise Disposer of events for placing me in that comfortable situation which I now fill. I live with Mr. H. entirely; his study is where I pursue my learning, and in an afternoon I meet his boys (there are only nine) at his vestry, to say a lesson or two with them. I learn *Latin*, *Geography*, and have got a considerable way in Doddridge's Lectures on *Pneumatology*, in which now and then I meet with a *philosophical* subject; indeed, my dear friend, I really am very comfortable.

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O! that my improvement may keep pace with the advantages I enjoy.

"But, my dearest friend, what a separation between us. I often think of you when in this study pursuing my learning; think! did I say? I cannot help thinking of you, and I will cherish every tender thought of a friend I so much love. Ofttimes I think that of an evening, when we are surrounding the family altar, you are engaged in the busy concerns of life—whilst I am enjoying the advantages of a *kind teacher*, a *good library*, and various other blessings, you are behind the counter of a glove shop. Yet do not despair. I hope we shall some future day enjoy one another's company, and these advantages connected with it. When I walk out, as I in general do every day for exercise, I imagine you to be here—I converse with you—I see you—and fancy many other enjoyments, which perhaps will not come so soon. When I last saw you I was exceedingly vexed that we could not have half an hour together in private; but, however, I know you regard me still—and am sure I love you much; and it is some pleasure to think that we can yet pray for one another. O do not forget me, unworthy as I am, in your approaches to the throne of grace. Pray that I may not abuse my privileges; but that whilst I am here it may be manifest that I am possessed of a prineiple of divine grace in my heart. But I hope I need not mention this to you, for you do, I trust, still remember me in your best moments. I have not forgot the pleasure I experienced the last time I saw you in London, nor the affectionate manner in which

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you conversed with me from Mr. F——'s to my cousin's the last evening.

"I had a very tedious journey here, as I could not sleep *all night* in the coach. But I think I am well repaid. I did not imagine that I should be treated with such care; I have a nice little bed to myself; and, in short, am surrounded with blessings. I take some pleasure in contrasting my present situation with what it was when at Mr. Thodey's; but after I have considered the peculiar advantages of this to that, I find that there was one pleasure I enjoyed there which I do not here—that of your company and conversation; and thus is life made up of hopes and fears, pleasures and pains. May we be among those who are *strangers and sojourners* here, who seek a better country.

"The evening I generally employ in promiscuous reading, as the time is then as it were my own. As I come home from the vestry about an hour before the other boys, from that time till tea I am engaged in secret meditation, reading God's word, and prayer to him. Ah! Thomas, you are then more on my mind than during the other parts of the day, for I cannot but remember how often you have pressed on me the duty of private prayer; and indeed, my friend, you are then most remembered by me in the best sense. I do continue to pray for you; and I hope God will hear our petitions for one another, and send us answers of peace. I beg of you, I entreat you to be earnest in supplication for me, that if God has appointed me for the work of the ministry, I may be fitted for it,

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and have a divine blessing attending me in all I undertake.

"Mr. H. bids me write now and then the heads of a sermon of my own, and shew it him. I have yet only done one: it met his approbation.

"Be so kind as remember me to Mr. F——, &c. &c.—I suppose you like your business as little as ever; but I hope you will soon be put in a situation where you will enjoy yourself more—I mean in the best enjoyments. I still hope that we, formed for each other's comfort, shall yet be made blessings to each other, and that in a particular way. Then let the conceited, covetous worldling say, 'Friendship is but a name'—we know it is something more—it is a great blessing; and where the friends have grace in their hearts, it is so eminently and especially. David and Jonathan found it so. I often think of your noticing particularly that expression, *their souls were knit together*. Dr. Young thought so when he said, 'poor is the friendless master of a world.' I am thankful that I have had such a friend cast in my way that will be, I trust, a blessing to me all through life, and that will dwell with me in a better world. May the hope of that happiness stimulate us to more resignation to the divine will, and holy disdain of the vanities of time and sense.

"And now, my dear friend, my letter draws to a close; I can scarcely forbear tears while I write it. I hope you will overlook its very visible imperfections, and remember that it comes from one that loves you.—Need I again beseech you to pray for me, that I may find mercy of the Lord, be bles-

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sed with every blessing here below, and crowned with glory hereafter.

"Write me what religious intelligence you know I am ignorant of: I see the Magazine here and other periodical works.——And now I desire to commit myself, my dear friend, and all our concerns, into the hands of a covenant God; and wishing you every blessing, I rest your ever faithful and affectionate friend,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

No. 9.

Harwich, February 24, 1806.

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"More than a fortnight ago, according to agreement, I wrote to you; as I have not heard from you since that time, my mind is full of anxiety on that account, as I know not what to assign as a reason for it. I hope you received it, for I should never like our correspondence to be investigated by any body but ourselves. I hardly know how to write this letter; whether I should inform you of circumstances I mentioned in my last, (being in doubt whether you received it) or, taking for granted that you have had it, shall I *tenderly* chide you for not answering it. I cannot think you have either forgotten me, or are grown careless about me, and yet what can I say! *I am full of conjectures.* Have you been so busy as not to have time to write; or have you written, put it in the post, and the

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letter miscarried? I hope you will write to me, and inform me which of these is the real case.—Need I tell you again that I am peculiarly comfortable in my situation, having nothing to render me otherwise but the absence of my *friend*, and my not having heard from *him:* nor from home either; for I wrote to my father, and I have not yet received an answer, which I expected immediately; indeed I cannot at all account for these things.

"As Mr. Hordle was a student at Hoxton, I have learnt a few things respecting the nature of the place, which perhaps you will like to know, for who can tell but some future day you may take the second, third, and last step towards being connected with them. You told me you had taken the *first* some time ago. But to drop this. The students, then, find themselves *candles for their own studies, soap, towels, tea,* and they have one *gown* to study in, &c. they have family prayer altogether morning and evening: you know what they learn. I am very fond of Mr. H.'s preaching: we had three very fine sermons yesterday, on Exod. xxxiii. 16; 1 Cor. iv. 5; Eph. ii. 8. I have just begun to enter the heads of the sermons in a book, and I am sure he is like a father to me; I am indeed very well treated. I hope you are earnest in prayer, that God would let you know his will concerning you. O, my friend, I should think myself *very happy* if I could do any thing for you. Although I do not speak to you now, nor see you, nor hear from you, yet I do feel pleasure in praying for you. I never was better in my life than since I have been at Harwich. A day or two ago I began to learn Hebrew. I often

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think you would be in your element in this study, with the advantages of learning, &c. I begin now to have a *little* idea of Geography; know more Latin than before, and study every day Locke's Conduct of the Understanding, and Doddridge's Lectures; besides a deal of cursory reading, &c. for here is a very nice library, to which I have free access. I told you in my last to let me have Mr. E——'s address. Hope you will remember me to all our friends. Give my respects to Mr. J. F—— and T. E——. As I do not remember any thing else that I have to say, I conclude with subscribing myself, yours, by all the tender ties of friendship,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

No. 10.

Harwich, April 4, 1806.

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"I received, with the greatest pleasure, your letter of the 29th of February, together with my father's; and, as I was sorry you did not write to me before, so was I equally grieved at the cause: I sympathize with you in your afflictions, and hope that you are now quite recovered and—the rest of the family. I believe you when you say it affords you so much pleasure to hear of my welfare. O! *Thomas*, pray for me that my very comforts do not become snares. I should like to have had more of the heads, texts, &c. of the sermons you have heard in London; and hope that you find the ministry of Mr. K—— and those you hear at Hoxton beneficial to your soul; for it is my earnest desire that,

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under the influences of the sacred Spirit, your soul may be like a well-watered garden. I (of course) hear Mr. H. three times on the Sabbath day, and I think I can say it has been to my profit: his sermons are indeed very *judicious*, *experimental* and *practical*, and I find it to be just the preaching *I want*. I keep a book, in which I put down the heads of most of his sermons, which, when it is full, I intend (if you would like) that you shall see. I suppose of an evening we have not less than four hundred and fifty people; in the day time not quite so many. There is a band of singers in the table pew, generally a bass viol is played, and Mr. H. preaches in a gown, and I think the people are more attentive than any I ever saw. Once in a fortnight Mr. H. preaches at the *Work-house:* I have been twice, and I like it *very much*. In the week day I go to the Methodist chapel, and sometimes hear a good sermon there. I find by the Magazine that Mr. S—— is at Spa-fields chapel. I have spoken often about him to you, and have mentioned him in my letters (though by the bye I spelt his name wrong.) He is a Cheshunt student—has preached very frequently at Hertford chapel. I would advise you, if convenient, to go and hear him, for he is a very bold and very faithful preacher. If you do, give me a little account of the sermon, &c. If I were you, I would try to hear Mr. B——'s missionary sermon.

"I am very glad that you informed me of Mr. F.'s and Mr. W.'s conversation. I liked it all very well, except that about my preaching, and indeed I had much rather that Mr. F. had not mentioned that for

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various reasons. If you have heard any more, pray tell it me.

'*He must not be put too forward.*'

"But you have raised my curiosity very much about the certain minister, who has, unsolicitedly, offered you his recommendation for Hoxton. But why this reservedness? I shall expect a friendly, satisfactory reason for your not telling me his name, &c. Do you think that I would abuse your confidence? I hope not,—I think I should know better. As the month is expired, you *must* tell me in your next more about it, as whether you have seen this certain minister? what he said to you? &c. &c. I hope I have obeyed your request, and prayed for you; may God grant us both more of a praying spirit, and may he answer our petitions, one for another. I thank you for Mr. E.'s address. I have not yet wrote to him—*must*—though, Thomas, I think now I should be completely unhappy, were I again to have any thing to do with business, and I feel for you, as you say your time is wholly taken up in it every day from six in the morning to eleven at night. I hope that while your aversion to the cares of the world increases, your spiritual affections are more animated, and your whole soul, from day to day, transformed more into the likeness of our lovely Jesus.

'*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*'—You seem peculiarly pleased with this passage, observe therefore,

1st.—That it is the *righteous* God regards;—those who are redeemed by the Son's blood;—loved

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by the Father's grace;—sanctified by the Spirit's influence.—Those who are weaned from the vanities of earth and time,—whose affections are set on things above;—in a word, who are born of God, and bound for heaven.

2d.—That they must *pray*.—Prayer is the breath of the new-born soul, a believer cannot live without it, for

'Prayer makes the darken'd cloud withdraw;
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;
Gives exercise to faith and love,
And brings down blessings from above.' NEWTON.

3d.—They must pray *fervently*. 'Cold prayers,' saith one, 'do but beg a denial.' In vain we offer up lifeless devotion to a heart-searching and rein-trying God.

4th.—These prayers are *effectual*, and avail much; they avail much in the sanctifying of our souls, and forming Christ there.

"Pardon this digression, as these thoughts have just sprung from my own mind.

"I hope you continue to enjoy your Sabbaths more than ever? How delightful it is '*to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple.*—That was Mr. H.'s text last Sabbath day morning and afternoon. In the morning he applied it to the church here below; showed what was meant by beholding the beauty of the Lord, and inquiring in his temple, and how desirable it was, &c. In the afternoon, he applied all (with the greatest propriety) to heaven. Two very excellent sermons.

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"I cannot yet give up the thought that we shall soon live together again; if we are to be so favoured, how thankful should I be; if not, we must learn to know no will but God's, and acknowledge that the Judge of all the earth will do right. As yet let us not despair, but commit all our concerns into the hands of our covenant God and heavenly Father. We know he will do all things well. My situation is as comfortable, or more so than ever, and I am considered like one of the family. We have a nice house, and here are only Mr. H. Mrs. H. the little child about eight months old—a sweet babe he is, —the servant and myself. I read Virgil in Latin now, and what I do learn of any thing serves to show me more of my ignorance. May the Lord keep me humble. I have theological questions to study, such as,

'Wherein appears the possibility of a divine revelation?

'Why is it desirable?' &c.

"I may consult books upon the subject, and here is a very good library. You will not forget your promise to write in your next about grace thriving in your heart. As for me it is with tardy steps I creep, sometimes joying, and sometimes sorrowing. And yet without boasting, I think I can say I have known more of heart religion since I have been here than before; but it is very little altogether. I have experienced many happy moments in secret, such times as remind me of our last Sabbath afternoon together. But O! what a deal of pride, rebellion, carelessness, and all kinds of wickedness is there in my heart; I tremble to think of what I deserve for my

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former levity, &c.—But O pray for me that I may find grace in the eyes of the Lord, and live to some purpose in the world. I am afraid that there are yet improper motives in my desiring the work of the ministry. Since I have been here I have seen some little of its nature, &c. I am sensible that no learning, or human qualifications are enough to fit me for that all-important work; and I hope, that God will pour down showers of grace on me, instead of what I deserve, 'vials of wrath.' When you give me a little account of your "growth in grace," and how the lamp of religion keeps alive, I hope you will retrace some of the paths in which the Lord your God has led you, and tell me something of your former experience, present enjoyments, and future hope. If you wish to go on from one degree of grace unto another, which I do not doubt, commune much with your own heart, read the Bible as much as possible, and above all things pray *fervently*.—I am perfectly well in health, as I hope you are. My father told me in his letter that Mr. M—— is still at ——, and that the chapel was still continued. I should like to have all the numbers of the Youth's Magazine (but September and October last, those I have) if I could have them sent conveniently; and it is not worth while to send by the coach, for you know the carriage will be more than the books are worth. Wishing you every spiritual blessing, I remain your affectionate and faithful friend,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

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No. 11.

Harwich, May 9, 1806.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I received your two last letters with great pleasure. It is highly gratifying to me to discover a great, and I believe a growing attachment in you towards your friend, notwithstanding he is so far from you. In your letter of the 7th April you say you rather expected a gentle reproof from me for your not writing to me; if so, what ought I to expect from you? But knowing the kindness of your heart, I forbear any more upon that subject. I was glad to hear of your comfortable interview with your friends at Coggeshall, and like your method well of consulting with your father on these occasions. Let us always manifest an obedient and dutiful regard to the advice of our parents; they, you know, are older than we, and more experienced; and the light of nature, as well as that of divine revelation, enjoins us to love, reverence, and obey them. I should not have expected that ——— would have acted so generously and friendly, as it appears he has done. I think from these circumstances there appears (something like) the kind hand of Providence, and I hope it will appear so to your satisfaction by and bye. I wait with anxiety the result of your intended interview with the Rev. ———, of Chelmsford, and I need not tell you to make it a matter of prayer; you know full well the *importance*, *necessity*, and *power*, of the prayer of faith. Your cousin Ford should remember that if

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the *turnpike road* is got too bad for people to walk comfortably in, the *fields* are more pleasant, as well as much nearer. How different are the views of good people, even in the most trifling things. When we get to heaven, there will be an end of all differences in sentiment and disposition. But I would not have you imagine that I (now) prefer Hoxton only on the account of its pleasantness, and the orthodox views of its supporters; but I would wish myself, and would have you follow, the leadings of Providence in this as well as every other respect: if it appears the Divine Will for you to go to Homerton, by all means go; but if not, you of course will not. However, you may be sure of one thing, and that is, that your friend will love you none the less for your preference of Homerton. But I do think that Hoxton will be the place for *you*. In your letter you have the *remarkable* words, 'respecting my intended subject, I do not remember that I promised an account of my own experience as to growth in grace.' Now perhaps you did not mean so in the letter referred to, but I understood it so. Your words were, 'I had a great deal to write of, I mean the best things, as, how grace thrives in the heart, &c. which I hope to *question* and write of in my next.' Now here by the word question I of course thought you meant *me*, by writing of it, some account of yourself. But it appears it was not so; and now I confess if it was not so designed, I do not know your meaning. I have been particular in stating this, in order to prevent mistakes. I hope with you that in your present situation you are learning lessons that will be ben-

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ficial to you all through life. I hope you will see more and more of the vanity of the pursuits of time and sense, and be more and more separated form a world lying in wickedness, as that is a good evidence of having found grace in the sight of the Lord. I perceive by your expressions that you are fired with zeal. I hope it is according to knowledge, and that you are not venturing upon what you may repent of in some future day. To say my own thoughts, I do not think you are influenced by any wrong motives. I am pleased with your self-dedication to God; and I heartily wish that he may hear all your prayers, bless you with an increase of grace and gifts, if he think fit; but he that has the most grace makes the best minister, and will rise to glory, honour and immortality, at last, and shall shine as the stars in the firmament, and be forever blest; whilst the ungodly minister (O awful thought!) shall have his portion with hypocrites and unbelievers, shall be banished from the presence of the Lord, and be cast into outer darkness, the smoke of his torments ascending up forever and ever. I wish *you* could see Brown's Address to his Students in Divinity, which is prefixed to his View of Religion (an excellent body of divinity.) You would there see something of the import of being a minister of the gospel. O! my friend, it made me exclaim, '*who is sufficient for these things!*'

"There is certainly a great pleasure in receiving letters, and writing to each other; you and I experience this, don't we? Indeed you dwell much on my mind. I think if we were to see each other

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again, and have a little good conversation, it would be like '*cold water to a thirsty soul;*' it would refresh us, call again into more lively exercise our warm sensations of affection. What a blessing it is, I often think, that we ever met together. I am very glad that I ever lived at Mr. Thodey's; I there met with a worthy friend when I had none, learned a few lessons I was ignorant of, and was introduced (in some measure by being there) to Mr. Wilson. Now it is true we are far from each other, but what then? You are pleased, I know, at my little improvement in knowledge; and you, I hope, are about entering upon the ministerial office; and when I think of that, I also am highly pleased. A few weeks more, and something will be done for you. I have often told you, both in conversation and correspondence, not to be discouraged at a view of your own insufficiency, and you know God has chosen the foolish things to confound the wise, and he works by means that prove his sovereign hand. But I must hint that your low views of yourself will do you no harm. Go on to despise the world and all the enchanting allurements it holds out, and be vigilant, for the adversary of whom you speak is never idle. How does he tempt us to think lightly of religion—*to foolish and unedifying conversation*—to offer up *short, cold,* and careless *prayers,* and I know not what beside. Pray, then, that while Satan is attempting to damp, nay quench the rising flame, the Holy Spirit may pour in plentifully the oil of grace, and cause it to rise to all eternity. —You, I hope, do not intend to flatter me (for friends should never flatter, and I hate it) when

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you say, you think I am fitting for some active elevated sphere in the cause of Christ. Ah! Thomas, you do not see how unworthy I am to be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, as I do, much less fill some *elevated station.* And indeed did I possess the wisdom of Solomon, the learning of Paul, and the eloquence of Apollos, without their piety what am I?—'*Like sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*' I feel my need of divine grace, without which I am less than nothing, and can do nothing What a dreadful thing must it be to have our parents, teachers, seminaries, gifts, examples, our Bibles, books, instructions, vows and resolutions, prayers and sermons, *all rise up in judgment against us!* The thoughts of it are enough to make our blood run cold. May the glorious and gracious God forbid such a doom for Jesus Christ's sake. To this I know you will say 'Amen.' On the other hand, how glorious must be the lot of the faithful sent minister of the gospel: methinks I see him rising (at the judgment day) from the long sleep of death, with a smile of holy pleasure on his sacred countenance, and heavenly glory in his soul. I see him approach the tribunal of his reconciled Judge, and having the pardon of all his sins made manifest before an assembled world, with a goodly number of seals to his ministry, he exclaims in the language of holy gratitude, peace, and triumph, '*Here am I, Father, and the children thou hast given me!*' O may such blessedness be yours and mine; this will ten thousand times more than compensate for the troubles and trials met with in the ministry. Amen, saith your longing soul.

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"Saturday, May 10.—With respect to the work of grace on my own heart, I feel shy to say much about it, fearing that after all my profession I should become a cast-away, and the root of the matter not be in me. I feel such a lifeless frame of mind, such coldness in prayer, in short, I indeed think that I have more evidences of reigning sin than of the life of religion. I wish to 'read my title clear to mansions in the skies.' I wish to be more Christ-like, more heavenly and spiritual; but I can only say with David, '*My soul lies cleaving to the dust, quicken thou me according to thy word.*' I would fain believe, my God help and subdue my unbelief. I dare not say any thing, but hope and trust at present, nay hardly that, for I often feel such a gloom upon my mind that you cannot conceive of. I think it is wrong to give way to it, and I fear if I did I should become quite melancholy. One reason is, that I want my friend, and feel his loss. If you were here, how could we relax our minds from study by a pleasant walk and agreeable conversation. When I walk out (if Mr. Hordle is not with me) there is no person whose company I much value. Sometimes one of the boys that Mr. Hordle teaches is with me; but I believe he had rather be at play than conversing about any thing that would do him good; and really I have walked so much alone lately that it gets quite insipid. When I first came, I enjoyed my solitary walks much better than I do now—what is the reason? I cannot tell: it is, however, one great comfort that I am so well provided for. Mr. and Mrs. H. had an only child, but eight months old, I think the

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most beautiful and lovely boy I ever saw: his smiles had often filled our hearts with joy, and the openings of his infant mind were delightful as the blossoms in spring. Though so young, he knew very well I loved him, and I know he was very fond of me—so pleased on my return after I had been out, and so very sensible for a child of his age. When I wrote you last he lay very ill, and I believe died the day after. His death grieved me very much, and I could not study for some time; but it is a comfort to reflect that he is now present with the Lord, and forever blest. But what a trial to lose him! I felt much for his parents, who doated on him; and I confess I never loved a child as I did him.—I think if we were to live together again, how happy we should be: I mean where we could pursue our studies together. If you are at Hoxton when I am, I hope we shall be in the same class. I should like you to go in just before me, or when I do, that so I might not be quite a stranger in the house, and have no one there that I know, for that would be very uncomfortable. You and I used to interest ourselves very much in the case of the highwayman that broke out of Hertford jail, and passed for a serious man. My father informs me, that he has been taken in his old courses, and hung a little while ago at Lancaster, an awful instance of hypocrisy and deceit. I read in a newspaper, that he gave a paper there to the church minister, in which he said, that he had broke open fifty houses, stole thirty horses, and committed more highway robberies than his memory could recollect. With respect to joining a church, I think it is your duty, as you

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therein give yourself up to God in solemn dedication—make a more open profession of his gospel, and declare yourself on the Lord's side. Join that church, (be which it will) where you enjoy much under the ministry, where you have often received spiritual nourishment for your immortal soul. I think you will do wrong if you do not join God's people in that manner, for it is an incumbent duty. Your going to Hoxton would not make any difference, for the students there sit down at the different places in London—some at Hoxton chapel—some at Mr. Brooksbank's—some at Mr. Clayton's, and in short wherever they have been members before, or where the minister admits them as occasional communicants. For myself, I cannot yet think of doing it. I am glad you are reading Halyburton's life, and hope you will find it profitable. I hardly know what to do about the Youth's Magazine—carriage is too dear; however, I think you had better send them with your next letter; all, you know, except September and October last, which I have.

"Questions lately studied.—'What perfections dwell in God, and how do you prove them to be in him without referring to the scriptures?'

"'How do you prove that the scriptures are the word of God?'

"'How do we know that the scriptures have been faithfully conveyed to us, and not corrupted?'

"I have not heard any thing of Samuel for these two letters; hope he is well. Make my best respects to him. And now, commending you to our glorious Saviour, and hoping that one day it will ap-

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pear more particularly, that we were designed for great blessings to each other, I remain,

"Your affectionate and faithful friend,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

No. 12.

Harwich, June 14, 1806.

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"I received your parcel the morning after you sent it, and read your letter with the greatest pleasure. You judge rightly when you say, you suppose that I was anxiously waiting to hear from you. The providential dealings of God with you have (I hope) filled me with wonder and praise. Surely both of us have great reason to say, '*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.*' Let us not forget any of his benefits, but for these displays of his goodness, dedicate our bodies and souls to his glory, which is only our reasonable service. Let us both rejoice, that God has put this his *treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man.* Little did you expect a few years ago, that you should be providentially called into the work of the ministry; but now you can rejoice, that unto you, who, *in your own view*, are less than the least of all the saints, is this grace given, that you might preach among poor sinners the unsearchable riches of Christ. Observe now the dealings of Providence in this circumstance. You are in a waiting frame, and when so God appears to grant you the desire of your heart. He has

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now made your path clear before you, and as to its being the call of God, I have not the least doubt; but, however, I hope you will recollect, that though your way has been thus shewn to you, it may not always be so; difficulties, great and many, may await us both in our journey through life; but God has said, when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and will prevent the floods from overflowing thee. Having such promises as these, my dear friend, let us press forward, and with holy resignation say, 'Where he appoints I'll go and dwell.' 'Tis true, we know not what a day may bring forth; but this we know, that God will never forsake those who put their trust in him, but will be their sun to illumine them, their shield to defend them, and their God eternally to bless them. I do not at all wonder at your being perplexed in your mind about mentioning matters to ——. Had I been in your state, I should have dreaded it; but you did well in making it a matter of prayer before God, and God was very gracious in ordering it as he has done. You know that prayer to God is the best way of *making things sure*—so you, I trust, have found it. I should like to know the other circumstances at which you hint, but I dare say they are too tedious to mention; perhaps we may see each other soon, when *conversation* will settle it. I am much pleased, nay delighted, with the conversation you had with Mr. W. He is, I doubt not, a warm friend to the cause of Christ, and does all he possibly can to forward it in the world. I am like him in regard to zealous and earnest preachers, and like to see animation and life in a pulpit, and where the preacher's

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mind is fettered with notes there can be none. You know I thought, when I lived with you, that —— and —— were good sort of men; they would not do any harm, but wanted to see something of their growing usefulness. I don't doubt, but I shall soon have a letter from you, dated Hoxton Academy, &c. and I wish we may be there together, for it will be very awkward for you or me at first to go there when there is nobody we know. I wish we might be in the same class, &c. so that we might be helpers one to another, and shew that we are the servants of the living God. I know that Mr. H. writes to Mr. W. about me. I know I am, as Mr. W. says, young and inexperienced; but I want divine grace, &c. to strengthen me for every duty, and prepare me for every duty. But, however, I don't think that Mr. T. knows any thing about the time when I shall be admitted. Though I did not mention it in my last, yet I do not think Mr. ——'s is a proper church for you to join as a student; when considered as a Christian, merely, it would do very well, but as now you are to consider yourself as about entering the work of the ministry, it alters the case. I never heard Mr. ——, therefore know nothing of him, or his church; but Mr. B—— I have heard more than once or twice; and if I were to recommend any church that I know in London as proper for you to join, it should be his. I have often thought that I should like to sit under him myself. Concerning *your religious experience—doctrinal sentiments—and ministerial motives**—I should rather think that your

* Referring to that summary of his views on these points, which, as a candidate for admission into Hoxton Academy,

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own plan, however simple, would be much better than any I can prescribe; but as you know most of my tenets pretty well, I do not know that I shall now write a confession, but will here give you a few directions only, which, if you like, you can adopt, but if not, discard them totally. In your religious experience, I would observe the order of time, state when you first received serious impressions, how they were fastened on your mind, what effect they had on your conduct, &c. in your own way. In your doctrinal sentiments, begin with the object of worship—God. State your views of the persons in the Godhead, quote scripture to prove your ideas of the Trinity. Then about man, his creation, fall, ruin, recovery, and so on. Be particular in saying there is no salvation but in Christ. Speak your opinion of the influences of the Spirit, the efficacy of divine grace in the conversion of sinners. The dealings of God with his people. The doctrines of election, perseverance, &c. Then that you think, (if you do) that it is the duty of all men to believe the gospel (I believe it.) That God will soon judge the world. That sinners will be sent to hell, and saints taken to heaven and glory, &c. &c. I have read Mr. H——'s piece against C. and I by no means approve of it. He evidently has written on a subject for which he is by no means capable; for he does not at all understand the difference between *natural* and *moral* inability—on which my mind has lately been much employed, and about which Mr. H. and I have conversed. There have been two pieces about it in some

his friend was about to present to the committee of that institution.

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of the last numbers of the Evangelical Magazine. Now, *natural* or *physical* inability is such as a man feels who, we'll suppose, is quite blind, when another tells him to open his eyes. Now this is *naturally* impossible. *Moral* inability is such as a man feels if he is told, for instance, to come to Harwich. He says, I am very busy, and indeed I can't come: now we know he *might* come if he *would*. He has power to walk to the coach, &c. but his *cannot* is his *will* not. Now, which of these two is the inability of sinners to come to Christ? Pause here a moment, and think. I once was almost ready to suppose, it was like that of a blind man to open his eyes; but if so, why does God command him to see? Why does he feel remorse that he has not done so, on his death-bed, or at other times? He knows he might have done otherwise if he would. The swearer may forbear to take God's name in vain if he will: can he not? If not, why will not God hold him guiltless? Their defect then is not natural but moral: that is, it is a defect in the will, which nothing but grace can remedy. Now, then, I am well convinced with Mr. C. that the defect is not natural, but moral—what think you? Perhaps you never thought much on the subject. I would advise you to read a little tract of Moseley's on the subject. Now Mr. H. does not understand this distinction; but supposes, by saying it is not natural, we mean, that it is not common to all, or universal: now we know it is, and that in this sense it is not natural: but had Mr. C. used the word *physical*, or explained his meaning a little, perhaps he would not have been attacked by an —— *Antinomian.*

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"I am very glad you sent the Youths' Magazines: I like them very well. I am very sorry you were not at prayer meeting in time; but I attach not the least blame to you, because of your hard work on Saturday, and so late. I think there is generally something to imbitter our comforts a little. I should also have rather heard that you were very happy in the time of prayer, than that you were very uncomfortable; but don't be cast down. Mr. W. encourages you; your friends do the same, and God appears to be on your side; and you know, if he is for you, none can prevail against you. Do, now, take encouragement from the circumstance of the cheesemonger's man, (now the Rev. J. G. of Devon,) and Mr. C. &c. and I am confident, that as God sends you into the work of the ministry, he will give you abilities sufficient. —Trust, then, in him—pray to him—be humble—be resigned—and I do hope you will experience divine consolations, heavenly support, and abilities sufficient. The preaching at the poor-house pleased me much; your text was very appropriate; and there is something in the nature of the gospel which is peculiarly adapted to the poor. Now there does not seem any congruity between a fine chapel, very elegant and grand, with carriages at the door for the hearers, and the doctrines of the meek and lowly Jesus. This does not, I say, appear fit; and the gospel was originally preached to the poor. I am glad you was not embarrassed at all, and hope you will be the means of doing much good. Get your subject well into your mind for Mr. K.'s room; think of how you shall arrange it, &c. as

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Mr. W. told you. Tell me in your next your plan, heads, &c. and whether you use notes or no. If you think you cannot do without short ones, use them; but do not slavishly attend to them. I think you had better work it well into your mind first, and then deliver it extempore, or without notes. Don't be too delicate, or mind too much the smells of rooms, and so on; but consider Him who endured all kinds of hardships, lest you be weary and faint in your mind. I find I must not expect to hear from you till after your examination in July: well, let me have the more when you do send. About the logical definition, I shall say no more; only that I think you are very much mistaken when you imagine that I increase so much in knowledge, for I really do not think I do so much as I ought; indeed these blundering letters are evidence of it, so. pray don't flatter. I did write a little in my last about my present experience, I believe, because I thought it was what you wanted. You say it is not *quite* possible to recollect all one has written in a former letter: I say, I know it is quite impossible. You say you should like to see the answers to the questions which I sent you; having room, I will transcribe some of them for you.

"Question.—'How do you prove the existence of a God, without referring to the scriptures, or from the light of nature?'

"Answer.—'(1st) All nations, heathens, Jews, Mahometans, and Christians, harmoniously consent that there is a God, who created, preserves, and governs the world.'

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" '(2d) There is a great impression of Deity on the mind of every man; that is, an indistinct idea of his being, and a readiness to acquiesce in the truth of his existence.'

" '(3d) The works of creation demonstrate it; their alterations and dependence prove them not to have been from eternity—they could not form themselves—chance could not produce them—matter cannot change its own form, or produce life or reason; therefore there must be a God.'

" '(4th) It is agreed from the support and government of the world—the heavenly bodies—seasons—weather—vegetables—sagacity and instinct of animals—herbs, &c.'

" '(5th) From the punishments which have been inflicted on nations and persons for their excessive immoralities.'

" '(6th) From the terror and dread which wound men's consciences when guilty of crimes which other men do not know, or are not able to punish or restrain, as in the case of Nero, Domitian, and others, and that, too, when they laboured to persuade themselves and others that there was no God, &c.' —*See Brown, Doddridge's Lectures, Ridgley, Buck's Dictionary, &c.*

"Question.—'How do you prove that the scriptures have been faithfully conveyed to us?'

"Answer.—'In translations those books retain manifest marks of their Eastern original.'

"Notwithstanding all that Christ and his apostles inveighed against the wickedness of the Jews they never charged them with corrupting a single text in the Bible. The various sects among the

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Jews, viz. Pharisees, Sadducees, &c. have rendered it impossible that they could corrupt them, as well as the animosities which have ever since prevailed between the Jews and Christians, so that neither of them could vitiate these sacred oracles, without being shamefully detected. Had the Jews attempted to corrupt these sacred books, it would certainly have been in those passages in which the fearful wickedness of their nation is described, and Jesus Christ magnified and honoured; but in none of them do we find the least mark of concealment or corruption. That they should be corrupted among Christians, is equally incredible: such was the multitude of copies, hearers, readers, and even sects, among them, that it is impossible they should ever have succeeded. Through the errors of transcribers, &c. the comparer of a multitude of copies cannot fail to find a number of translations.'—*See Brown's View of Religion.*

"Question.—'What proofs have you that man was at first created righteous and holy?'

"Answer.—(1st) 'Universal tradition; for all nations have supposed mankind to have once been in a holy and happy state.'

" '(2d) The nature of things; for it seems very improbable that so holy and so good a God should have formed mankind, in the original constitution of their nature, in so corrupt and sinful a state.'

" '(3d) The natural resemblance men have to God in the spirituality, intelligence, and immortality of their souls.—Gen. ix. 6. James iii. 9.

" '(4th) The express declarations of scripture: Eccl. vii. 29. Gen. i. 26, 27. Colos. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 24.'

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"These will now serve you for further meditating on, as well as the subject of natural and moral inability; your opinion of which I shall expect in your next letter. If you can, I would advise you to get Mosely's Piece, or read attentively the pieces in the Magazine; one of them is a letter from Dr. Watts.—I told Mr. Hordle about your present prospects; I did not see any occasion to secret it, as Mr. W. knows it, and so many others: he is pleased on the account of it. He will be in London, if spared and well, on Wednesday the 24th instant, but do not think he will be there long enough to preach, for he is going much further, and will be away for a month, at which time we expect a supply from Hoxton: we shall have a student come down and stay all the time; which of them it will be I do not know. I have spoken to Mr. H. about Brown's View of Religion, and he says it is quite at your service: I shall enclose it, and hope you will read it attentively through—be sure you read the address to students, at the beginning; when you have done with it, (he will not mind your keeping it a month or more) send it by coach. In it you will find a whole body of divinity in a very little compass. The part on the light and law of nature is very excellent. He was a most eminent man, and mighty in the scriptures: may you and I be like him. I am glad to hear the good news you give me of your brother; I hope it will appear to be the work of grace upon his soul, and that he may really be converted. I like your plan of having a prayer meeting much—may you all experience the blessings you pray for.

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"As to drawing landscapes and plans you know I never was any hand at it, nor do I think of doing any thing in it; if I do, you shall have it. Perhaps I may give Samuel a note. You cannot receive this until Tuesday morning, although written on Saturday, because of the coach, so that I shall have time enough between now and then for thinking if there be any thing else to send. Wishing you every spiritual and temporal blessing, I remain your affectionate, though unworthy, friend,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

No. 13.

September 4, 1806.

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"How wonderfully has Providence appeared for you and for me. This time twelvemonth beheld us both buried in a glove-shop—buried, did I say—I recall the word, for we then enjoyed what we do not now, mutual conversation, and each other's company. Let us hope that the time may come when we shall again enjoy that. I am very glad that you succeeded so well as you did in your sermon before the committee; take encouragement from that circumstance to trust God for all your future discourses. The Sabbath day, August 17, though I found that I could not conveniently omit any one of the services, yet I assure you I did not forget your request. I cannot say that I think it is right (especially in me) to omit public worship for private devotion. And if I had done it, my conduct

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would in all probability have been more inspected about it than I should wish. I have not seen the rules of Hoxton Academy; I do not think Mr. H. has them; should like to see them much; hope you will send them next time. I am fully persuaded of the propriety, nay, duty, of your joining yourself to a church, which now I hope you have done; but for my own part, I must confess I have excuses for not doing it; and what church could I join now? Perhaps you say, Mr. Hordle's. I answer, there is no church I should so like to be a member of as his; but do you see a propriety in my being a member here, when I do not expect to be here any longer than Christmas? There could not in my view have been a more suitable pastor for you than Mr. B. I hope you will find his people as suitable as himself. I approve too of your attending the prayer meeting at his place of a morning, and hope you find that convenient. May you have precious opportunities in the chapel, at the Lord's table, and at the prayer meeting. You praise my verses too much. Indeed they were only the hasty productions of a few moments, and I have no copy of them, for I only wrote them on a slate, and then copied them on the letter. However, I am glad you receive them as a token of our regard and growing affection for each other.* I would advise you by all means to be very friendly with the young men, those with whom you can consistently be so. I mean the more

* Those who may be anxious to see these verses inserted in the Memoirs, are referred to page 13, for the reasons of their omission.

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pious, and those whom you feel most disposed to associate with. There are, no doubt, a variety of tempers, dispositions and ways in the academy, and it is there, I dare say, as in other places, some good and some bad. I do not wonder at your finding study to be wearisome and laborious. Solomon found it so.—Eccl. xii. 12. Others find it so. I sometimes find it so, but I am persuaded it will not be always so with you; and you should recollect that it is so different from what you have lately been engaged in, that I should wonder if it did not appear strange to you. But I should like to know what you are studying that is so difficult; is it Latin, Greek, English, Hebrew, or what? Now I do long to be there for the sake of your company as much as you wish me there. O, how charming it would be for us to study together. How cheerfully would I give you every instruction in my power. How willingly would I forego my own studies for the sake of improving the mind of a dear friend!—Such a time *may* come, and that's all I know of it; for, as to when it will be, I confess I know no more than you do. This only I know, that I shall leave Mr. Hordle at Christmas, and shall then see you, my father, mother, &c. who, I know, will be pleased to see me; but whether I shall come again to Mr. Hordle's or not, I believe nobody knows. I think that it is more likely that you should know before me, for Mr. Wilson and the committee have the management of it. I have one request to make to you which I hope you will grant, and that is that you write to my father at Hertford to tell him where you now are, &c. I know he will be very glad to hear

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of your welfare. Tell him that it was by my desire you write to him, &c. This request you *must*, *must* fulfil. I hope then my dear friend, you may be kept of God from following evil examples, (if such there be in a dissenting academy) and that it may appear that you are designed to fill some important station in the church of Jesus. Would it be amiss if we were both to learn Doddridge's 72d hymn, entitled, 'Isaiah's Obedience to the Heavenly Vision.' I know you will like the hymn much. There is one thing I do not like in Hoxton Academy, that is, their not learning Hebrew without the points, which are little dots or specks put under and about the letters. See on the commandments which are hung over the fire-place in the lecture room at the academy, if there are not such. Now, about these points there is a great dispute between the punctists and those who are not for their use. The punctists (Mr. S. is a strong one) contend that they are of great use. Some say they are of divine authority. The great Mr. Romaine, and the late learned Mr. Parkhurst, oppose this idea, and say that they are only little dots or specks added by ill-designing men to the letters. I feel inclined to believe them. Now, I dread almost the learning it with points, as it is extremely difficult; without them, it is simple and easy. Mr. H—— thinks they are of use, but does not think them of equal authority to the letters; and scarcely ever reads with them. Now, he thought it best for me to learn it without points with him, and then at the academy I could learn with them, and so read both ways. I have compiled a lexicon myself, contain-

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ing the roots of all the words in the language—that is, I have quite abridged Parkhurst's very valuable one (and what no Hebrew student should be without) into a portable form for my own use.—Now, I hope your mind will be eased, and your anxiety removed, and with the warmest affection,

"I remain,

"Your ever faithful friend,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

No. 14.

Harwich, Oct. 14, 1806.

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"As it is now considerably more than a month since you wrote me a note from Hoxton Academy, and I answered it, I conclude that a letter from me will be what you now desire; and yet I am not quite certain whether you should not have written first; but by way of compensation for my too long silence before, I am willing to converse with you on paper. And as Mr. Hordle is gone to Ipswich to-day, to an association of ministers, and I have nothing particular to be engaged in besides, I embrace the opportunity. You are now, I suppose, a little inured to study, and begin to find the difficulties of a student's life not so many as you apprehended they were. I long to know in what studies you are engaged, and how you like them. I have just begun the Greek language; so of course do not know much about it, my time having been of late principally employed in the He-

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brew, of which I am very fond, especially as I now read it 'unsophisticated by Rabinical points.' I please myself with the idea of seeing and conversing with you in the course of about *ten weeks*; but at that time there will be something else which I shall not so much admire. Do you ask me what it is? It is, my dear friend, nothing less than appearing before the committee of Hoxton Academy. The thought of it makes me almost tremble. Yesterday morning Mr. Hordle told me that I must prepare the account of my experience, sentiments and motives for wishing the ministry by November, to be then laid before the gentlemen of the committee. This you know must be done; and when I go to London about Christmas, I must go through all that painful task, which, as it respects you, is all over. He told me, too, that he supposed there would be some demur about admitting me, merely on the account of my youth; but he does not know that it will be so as to hinder my admittance. Mr. Wilson has, it appears, written to Mr. H. about it; so, if the affair succeeds well, I shall be in the Academy after Christmas *with you*. That one circumstance, your company and friendship, will make amends for all my trouble of mind on the occasion. You may be sure I shall communicate every circumstance to you, and keep nothing back, that so by one occurrence and another, our mutual attachment and sincere friendship may be increased and strengthened. What a *long* separation we have experienced: may we be brought together again to strengthen each other's hands, and be both engaged in the best employment. You must inform me in your next, how long you

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think it will be before you begin to preach, and tell me all your places of preaching, texts, plans, &c. I hope you have written to my father, as I requested you would. I believe they are going on as usual at Hertford. Mr. M. continues among them. May great grace rest upon them all. I do not doubt that I shall feel some degree of uneasiness when the time comes for my separation from my friends here at Harwich. I mean such as Mr. Hordle, &c. &c. But my satisfaction will be, that I shall see you who are still, and I hope ever will be, my dearest friend. We live in a world of changes. Life is indeed a chequered scene. And here we have no continuing city. May we seek one to come. May it be our happiness to enjoy the favour of Him who never changes, but is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. When I consider my exceeding sinfulness and depravity, besides my inability, I feel almost *disposed to wish* my views had never been directed towards the ministry, but it does appear a call of Providence. How could I do any thing else than come here. And now, perhaps, a door may be opened even for my being a student at Hoxton; but I shall go there under several disadvantages; for, being so young, I may expect a good deal of contempt from some self-sufficient and arrogant students, (if such there are) and you know they stay no longer than four years, and after that I shall be but twenty years old, and what can I then say to old experienced Christians. I do indeed feel a deal of discouragement. "O may the Lord encourage me," &c. But I shall come under some advantages; for, as I am *not altogether ignorant* of many things

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taught at Hoxton Academy, I shall find my studies easier than if I had to begin learning them, &c. I wish we could be in one class. Another disadvantage which Mr. Hordle has told me of is this—The students generally spend their money which they are paid for preaching, in books,* &c. Now, I shall be too young to preach for at least these four years, consequently I can have no books, &c. till that time. This appears a very great disadvantage. However, I would wish to leave all in the hands of God. He knows what is best for me. And if I am one of those who love God, and are the called according to his purpose, he will make all things work together for my good. I want that calm disposition which

* It may perhaps be considered as departing from the design of this volume, or descending too much to minute particulars—yet I cannot satisfy myself without directing the eyes of these gentlemen who may have the care of providing supplies for the pulpit in destitute churches, or in cases of the pastor's absence, to this important circumstance. But few of the students in our academies are overburthened with money—yet money is absolutely necessary for the purchase of books, without which their studies must be considerably retarded. Deacons, and others whom it may concern, should bear this in mind, in the compliments which they may make them for their occasional services; and remember, that there is no case in which they can with greater delicacy or propriety, display a generous regard to their wants in this respect, than when thus remunerating them for their acceptable labours. It is needless to express a disapprobation, which every candid mind must feel, of a conduct directly the reverse of this, which is perhaps too often practiced when the consideration is diminished for the very reason on account of which it ought to be increased—it is but a *student*.

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is careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, makes known its requests unto God. I often reflect on the dealings of Providence with us when I first came to Mr. T.'s. You, I suppose, had not the least prospect of being a student at Hoxton. And I could not see how my coming there to learn that business, could at all further my preparation for that sacred work. We there became friends. I was there just long enough to secure a worthy and affectionate friend, and to have the notice of Mr. Wilson. Now you, too, have left Mr. T. and are in the academy. I went, you know, home, not knowing what the event would be. Providence has sent me here; and O, "what am I, or my father's house, that he has brought me hitherto." We are now blind to futurity. We know not where we shall be placed in future life, whether far from, or near to each other. I hope you are happy in your own soul, and that you live near to God. There is a great danger of forgetting the concerns of our own souls, whilst we are constantly employed in studying divine things. I know a little of this from experience, and perhaps you do. I hope you continue to pray for me; that I may be kept from sin and evil, for you know '*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*' Does your brother David make progress in the divine life? You must, in your next letter, give me some account of the change which I hope is wrought in him, for I feel an affectionate regard for all who belong to you. I ought to write to Mr. E——. Is he well? When you see him, remember me to him, and also to your

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cousin F——. Tell him to write to me, if it will suit him. You may, likewise, if you please, tell him how my affairs stand, as I have stated to you. It will be needless for me to give you any advice respecting the composition of your sermons, or the prosecution of your studies, as you, without doubt, have access to so many books on the subject. I hope you will read 'Watts' Improvement of the Mind.' I think it must be charming to attend Walker's lectures on philosophy. Do you attend them? I should like it very much. Mr. H. told me, that he did give lectures at the academy: of course you are there when he does. You know now when to expect me in London, a little before Christmas, cannot say the exact day; so that now, if you like, you may count the time. Do not be long before you let me hear from you; and when you write, write a good deal. I remain, with the tenderest affection, your sincere and faithful friend,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

.....

Such, at this early age, were the letters of this amiable youth. For the introduction of so large a number it is unnecessary to apologize, since that heart is surely in an unenviable state which can derive no pleasure or profit from their perusal. Their simplicity is not their smallest ornament: whilst for the many useful hints which they suggest, as well as for the fervent and exalted piety which breathes throughout the whole, they may be consulted with considerable advantage by youthful candidates

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for the sacred office. Let such as early feel the desires he felt, and pant with an equal ardour for the work of God, imitate his modest diffidence—his devotional temper—his jealousy of the motives which influenced his choice—his intimate communion with his own heart—his love of retirement—his habitual reference of his affairs to the will of God—his addictedness to self examination and to prayer—and above all, that deep and solemn consciousness of the important work in which he desired, with fear and trembling, to be engaged!

In resuming the thread of the narrative, which the introduction of these extracts from his correspondence has suspended, it cannot but be gratifying to the reader, to be presented with that deep impression of Mr. Spencer's call and qualifications for the Christian ministry, which his familiar intercourse with him had produced on Mr. Hordle's mind.

In a recent letter to a friend, that gentleman observes:—

"I have had but one opinion concerning our late young friend, which is—that he was born a preacher, and as much called to it, as Jeremiah to the prophetic, or Paul to the apostolic office. All the powers of his soul were evidently formed for it. While he was under my roof, preachers and preaching were the constant topics of his discourse; and those studies which had an immediate reference to them were his delight. His remarkable gift in prayer, though then just turned of fifteen, astonished and pleased all that heard him. He usually took his turn in leading the devotions of our little family; and in

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his attendance on my ministry, I have sometimes seen the feelings of his heart in the tears that gushed from his eyes."

In perfect accordance with these sentiments are those expressed by the same gentleman, in a letter to a friend at Liverpool, dated Harwich, 13th Dec. 1811:

"Of his genuine piety, his fine imagination, his early attachment to theological pursuits, his love of study in general, his amiable disposition, and the powerful bias of his mind to the work of the Christian ministry, I have repeatedly declared my firm conviction; and had Divine Providence spared his valuable life, I have no doubt, as his judgment ripended, his character, excellent as it was, would still have improved."

Whilst such were the impressions, so truly honourable to his character, left upon his tutor's heart by the sweetness of his temper, and the vigour of his mind—it is pleasing also to observe the grateful and lively rememberance which the pupil cherishes of the kindness of his early friend.

In a letter, addressed to the Rev. Mr. Hordle, from Hertford, he observes:—

"The day of my examination is now fixed for the 7th of January. To that day, dear Sir, I look forward with trembling: may God grant me all that strength and boldness I shall then need. It is impossible for me to describe my feelings the night I left you. I tried to suppress any outward expressions of them as well as I could. But O! 'tis trying to part with friends who are become *very dear* to us; but is it not, also, comforting to look

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forward to a never ending eternity, when those who are cemented into one glorious body by the bonds of divine love shall never part?" Afterwards he adds:—"For my part, I desire to be entirely his, (God's) but still I find a heart of unbelief, ever prone to depart from the living God. I hope I feel my own unfitness for the important undertaking, for which it appears God designs me. May he keep me holy and humble, and fit me for all he has in reserve for me in the womb of Providence, whether prosperous or adverse."

In a subsequent letter, dated Hoxton, 25th March, 1807, he says—"I am told S——, of Kingston, is going to Harwich: hope you will find him a blessing to your family, and when he shall leave you, may he review with as much pleasure the year 1807, as I do the year 1806.——I trust I shall be constantly enabled to obey the kind advice which you gave me, and to lay every human attainment at the foot of the cross of Jesus; to dedicate all I have to him, of whom I would always esteem it my highest honour to learn; to give up every thing that I may be called to sacrifice for the promoting of his glory, and constantly to seek not my own things, but the things which are Jesus Christ's."

In another, towards the close of the year 1807, he writes:—

"I shall never forget the year I spent at Harwich; viewing one circumstance with another, I doubt not, but that it was as happy a twelvemonth as I shall ever live."

With such mutual feelings and expressions of affectionate regard, was Mr. Spencer's departure

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from Mr. Hordle's family attended. And this review of them will not be in vain, if it suggests to the young persons who may contemplate this imperfect portrait of one, whom living they so much admired, the vast importance of that impression, which the conduct of their childhood or their youth may leave in the scenes of their earliest association. For the most part, the character of the *youth* is the character of the *man*. If, on the circle of his earliest intercourse, an unfavourable impression of his disposition or his conduct is produced, there it is likely to remain; but, alas! there it cannot be confined; it not unfrequently travels further than the person with whom it is connected, and the character is familiar where the countenance is unknown. Who that has a respect, then, for himself, but must be anxious that the impression, upon which so much depends, should be a happy one; and that the correcter habits of maturer age should not be counteracted in their favourable operation by the injurious fame, or unpleasant recollections of his early years.

But we must follow the amiable object of our contemplation to a new scene.

The following are copious extracts from the papers which he submitted to the inspection of the committee at Hoxton, on his formal application for admission into that institution: they were accompanied by a note to T. Wilson, Esq.

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Harwich, November 10, 1806.

"HONOURED SIR,

"With diffidence I present the following account of my short experience, doctrinal sentiments, and motives for wishing to engage in the solemn and important work of the ministry, to your judgment and that of the committee. I am, with the sincerest gratitude for your favours, your humble servant,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

Harwich, Nov. 10, 1806.

"It was my happiness to be born of parents, who maintained a regard for real piety and the fear of God; by them I was, from my infancy, taught to read the scriptures, together with other books of a serious nature. I think I may safely say, that from my childhood I felt some more than common impressions on my mind, with respect to the existence and perfections of God, the evil and awful consequences of sin, and the advantages of being religious; but alas! these impressions, though so frequently felt, had not that abiding influence which they have had on the minds of others, but were like the '*morning cloud and the early dew which passeth away.*' As I grew rather older, I began to perceive some excellencies in religion, and to envy the happiness, which I believed serious people enjoyed. I knew something of the form of religion and the doctrines of it, from having been taught catechisms, and lessons calculated to

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give youthful minds some ideas of the worship and conduct which God requires. Yet notwithstanding this, I gave too much (far too much) attention to the reading of novels and romances, the unhappy effect of which I lament to the present day. Many of these books I procured of lads, without the knowledge of my father. I felt a degree of pleasure in hearing lively, animated sermons; but I have reason to believe that this sprung from a desire to please my friends, and give myself an opportunity of imitating the preacher's voice and gesture. I also composed little pieces of poetry on sacred subjects, which I have since destroyed, because I then knew nothing of experimental, vital godliness, and of course was only mocking God in them; but I did not give up making verses. All this while, I was totally ignorant of that divine principle of grace in the heart, without which, I am sensible, nothing we can do is acceptable to God. I knew nothing of the Holy Spirit's work, in convincing me of sin, and leading me to Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I knew nothing of communion with God and with his Son. I hope some of the sermons of Mr. Ebenezer White, of Hertford, were not altogether useless to me, as well as some which I heard at Lady Huntingdon's chapel there; but from my conduct at that time, in various particulars, I cannot say that I had experienced what was meant by being born again. If you ask me from what time I date my conversion to God, I must say, that the exact time I cannot tell; but I think I may also say, that the Lord drew me gradually to himself, and by degrees I loved devotional exercises more and more; and I hope that I have, within

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these four years, experienced many refreshing seasons. How I wish to have my evidences brightened, as it respects personal interest in the Lord Jesus Christ! I desire to cast my all upon him, and wait his will concerning me. However short my experience in the divine life has been, can I not appeal to God, and say, '*Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee?*"

.....

"I hope that my reasons for wishing to be a labourer in the Lord's vineyard are sincere, and that they do not spring from any improper motives. If I should be called into it, I pray that I may be kept faithful, and never shun to declare the whole counsel of God. As I know something of the excellency of the ways of wisdom, I am anxious that my fellow-mortals may be partakers of the same grace, and that they may be brought to know God, and experience the riches of divine love and mercy in Christ Jesus: and if God should so honour me, as to make me an instrument in his hand, of doing them real good, how happy should I be; how willing to endure hardships for Jesus' sake. As I trust God has given me a desire to act for his glory, and I know that he is glorified in the salvation of sinners, I am willing, if He should call me to the work, to engage in it. I am aware, that it is an arduous and a difficult work, yet from these principles, I would fain be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. I would follow the leadings of Divine Providence. By the good hand of my God upon me, I am brought hitherto;

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and although some circumstances are against me, yet, 'where he appoints, I'll go and dwell.' I am not quite sixteen years old, yet young as I am, I have committed many sins, and experienced many mercies. Now, unto Him that is able to keep me from falling, and to present me before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, forever and ever. Amen."

.....

"I believe in one God as the object of religious worship; that this God is from everlasting; and that in our Jehovah there are three distinct persons, viz. the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and yet these three are one; that this is a mystery which we cannot explain, yet must believe, because it is declared in holy writ. That man was created holy, but fell from his original rectitude, and sunk himself and all his posterity into sin and wo. I believe also, that God from all eternity elected and chose his own people unto eternal salvation; that men are in a lost state and condition, and are spiritually dead; that they cannot be saved by any merit or works of their own, but only by the righteousness of Christ the Saviour; that it is by the operation of God the Holy Spirit on the mind of man, that he becomes a sensible sinner; that his understanding must be enlightened before he can choose God for his portion, or the paths of religion as those in which he will walk. It was for this end and purpose that Christ Jesus came into the world, viz. to save sinners by his own blood; and I am persuaded that there is sal-

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vation in no other but in him, and that '*he is able to save to the very uttermost all that come unto God by him.*' I believe that he is the eternal God, '*the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever;*' that his grace is all sufficient, his name, person, and all that concerns him, is precious to them that believe; that those who exercise a living faith upon him, are justified from all their sins—at the same time I know, that believers are called to be holy, and that it is by the consistency of their walk, that they are to evidence to those around them, that their profession is sincere, for '*without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*' As I am fully satisfied with respect to the divine origin of the scriptures, and the inspiration of the holy men who wrote them, so I believe, that they are the unerring standard by which to try our faith, and upon which we are to rest our opinions. I believe, that the people of God should form themselves into separate churches, that they may enjoy the benefit of divine ordinances, such as baptism and the Lord's supper, together with the hearing of the word, &c. I believe, that the ordinance of baptism is to be administered to the children of believers, inasmuch as it is a sign of their admission into the visible church, and as it is emblematical of the giving of the Holy Ghost, and that it is to be administered by sprinkling. I believe, that, notwithstanding all the Christian's enemies and dangers, he shall hold on his way, and grow stronger and stronger; and though the doctrine of final perseverance has been much abused, as well as its truth much questioned, it is an article of my faith, because God's word declares it. I believe in the approach

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of a judgment day—the eternal glory of believers, and the insufferable torments of the wicked in hell. I believe that God will have the whole glory of the salvation of those who are saved forever and ever; and that through all eternity they will ascribe dominion, power and glory to Him who loved them, and washed them in his own blood—at the same time, sinners will everlastingly blame *themselves* for their perdition and wo."

On the 7th of January he appeared at Hoxton, before the committee, and underwent the examination which he had so long and so anxiously anticipated—with success and honour: was admitted a student, and became immediately an inmate of the house. In a letter to his friend, Mr. Hordle, dated Hoxton, January 21st, 1807, he says—

"Two things make this day remarkable to me—one is, that it is my birth day, as I am now sixteen years old; the other is, that I have been a fortnight in this house. On Wednesday the 7th inst. that long dreaded day, I appeared before the committee. Your imagination may represent a little boy speaking before them. I felt a good deal of timidity, and waited the event with feelings of anxiety."——"I hope I can say, I feel the importance of that work for which it appears God in his providence has designed me: but oh! I need larger degrees of grace to fill that station in such a manner, as that my own soul, and the souls of my fellow creatures, may be benefitted thereby."——"I recall to my mind occurrences which transpired when I was at Harwich—O may I have all God's dealings sanctified unto me. I want a deeper acquaintance with my own heart,

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and a more influential knowledge of God my Saviour."

That, on his entrance into the Academy at Hoxton, Mr. Spencer was no novice in the knowledge and experience of divine things, is obvious from a perusal of the papers above cited. With a mind already the subject of considerable culture, and habits formed for the pursuits of science, he commenced his academical course under circumstances the most auspicious. The importance of such a previous preparation in candidates for the Chrisian ministry, and the patronage of our dissenting colleges, is not, perhaps, sufficiently considered. It is to be regretted, that so many enter without having previously obtained the lowest rudiments of general science, or even a tolerable acquaintance with their native tongue. The time allotted for a student's residence is, in the most liberal institutions, but short, compared with the immense labour and magnitude of the object to be obtained. But much of this time, short as it is, must be expended in the inculcation of those first principles of knowledge, which might be easily obtained elsewhere; and then when the student is somewhat prepared for studies more suitable to the dignity of a college, he begins to preach. Thus an attention which ought to be undividedly devoted to the labours of the study and the exercises of the class, is partly lavished on preparations for the pulpit and public services. Hence arose the plan, so judiciously adopted in certain cases, in connexion with the college of which Mr. Spencer was a member, and of the beneficial tendency of which he was so striking an example, of

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sending the candidates who may be defective in these radical points, or too young for admission, to some pious and able minister for preparatory instruction. But these instances, the offspring of a peculiar necessity, shew the importance of an institution, founded expressly for preparatory studies,—that so a matter of such vast importance to the respectability of the ministry may not be left to the casual benevolence of liberal and enlightened individuals, or any happy combination of circumstances in a solitary case.*

In the mean time, to remedy, as far as may be, by his own exertions, this serious defect, should be an object of conscientious regard to every young man whose views are directed to the Christian ministry. By a diligent improvement of his time—by a careful employment of those smaller portions of it, which in too many cases are suffered imperceptibly to slide away—aided by the friendly direction and advice of some prudent and well-informed minister, which may without much difficulty be in every case obtained—any one of tolerable capacity and perseverance might afford his own mind a considerable degree of cultivation, and attain a portion of knowledge, ere his entrance into an academy, most favourable to the facility and success of his pursuits whilst there.

These remarks more particularly apply to those young men, who, with views directed towards the

* The reader who would be gratified with an outline of the course of study pursued in most of our dissenting colleges, may turn to the *Appendix, No. L*

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ministry, are still engaged in secular employments, and to whom the privileges of an academy must be, in the first instance, regarded as a distant object.

Little of importance can be expected to have transpired, in connexion with the early part of Mr. Spencer's residence at Hoxton. It appears, however, that here, as in the Poultry and at Harwich, his interesting appearance and amiable manners soon gained him the love and esteem of all. The tutors and the students alike felt an interest in this new and youthful member of their literary society—and he applied himself with diligence to the improvement of those advantages which he there enjoyed. He was now introduced to a wider range of observation and of study. But whilst a respect to the orders of the institution, and a desire to render himself, by useful acquirements, respectable in any circle in which it might be his future lot to move, induced him to apply with becoming diligence to the various occupations assigned him, he yet dwelt with peculiar attachment on such as were more immediately connected with the work of preaching. And with an ardent desire to be early and extensively employed in the ministry of the gospel, a desire strengthened and confirmed by time, it can be no matter of surprise, that to this darling object were directed all the hours of his leisure, and all the ardour of his soul.

At the vacation in June he returned to his father's house at Hertford. During his stay there he preached his first sermon in public. It was at the small village of *Collier's End*, six miles from Hertford. His auditory consisted of about thirty plain country

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people—and his text was 1 John i. 7, '*The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.*' Simple and unlettered, however, as his audience might be, they had sufficient penetration to discover the uncommon talents of their youthful preacher; which, together with the novelty and loveliness of his juvenile appearance, excited in that little village an astonishment and admiration, which have since circulated through all the districts of the great metropolis, and almost every town in Great Britain. How beautiful is the progression which marks all the dispensations of nature, providence, and grace. From the smallest springs the mightiest rivers rise, to promote the fruitfulness or waft the commerce of the world. From the grain of mustard seed, the kingdom of heaven gradually rises and expands, till it becomes a great tree, beneath whose shade all the nations of the earth repose; and in the history of individuals,—from the day of small things, has not unfrequently arisen a career, whose brilliancy has dazzled and surprised the world; and from the remarkable concurrence of circumstances, events the most important to the interests of the individual, and the happiness of mankind, have sprung. It is for the most part denied to men, who move in a public and extended circle, to witness those early displays of genius, and that gradual developement of talents, afterwards so eminent for their usefulness or splendour, upon which the eye of a philosopher would love to dwell. This is usually the privilege of a few obscure individuals in some retired spot. The new fledged bird first tries its pinions in its own sequestered bower ere it soars above its native

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glen, and courts the admiration of man by the boldness of its flight, or the sweetness of its song. And yet there is such a peculiar interest connected with the early efforts of a mighty mind, and the first stages of an eminent career, that we gather with diligence all that can be gleaned respecting them, and listen with delight to the narration of those who were spectators. But few perhaps who have heard of Spencer, but would gladly be transported to the peaceful village of *Collier's End*, and mingle with the auditors under his first sermon there. And it requires no uncommon acquaintance with the principles of our nature, and the doctrine of association in the human mind, to predict, that the villages of *Halfway Street*, and *Lewisham*, in Kent, will derive some celebrity in the religious world from having been the scenes of ministerial labour, when a youth, to a preacher, who for these twelve years past has held the delighted auditories of the metropolis the willing captives of his eloquence.* And surely such a principle as this, whilst in its gratification it yields an undescribable pleasure, may be cultivated to no small advantage. It banishes from the mind that despair of reaching

* The name of Doctor Collyer is too well known to derive any additional celebrity from being copied on a page my hand has written. And perhaps I may be censured for indulging in an allusion here which bears at least the *appearance* of flattery. Far be it from me to cherish such a principle. The work in which I am engaged is sacred to friendship and to the memory of departed worth; and is it at all surprising, that whilst endeavouring to preserve the record of a friend removed by *death*, my memory should sometimes recur to the many excellencies which have so long endeared to me a friend from whom I am removed by *distance?*

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it, which a contemplation of exalted eminence might inspire, by an assurance, that the object at which he aims is not unattainable, since its present possessor once occupied the same level with himself, and was attended by circumstances as unfavourable to his elevation as those which at present may encompass him.

Our amiable young preacher's first sermon excited a strong desire in his hearers for a repetition of his labours; and his fame, rapidly circulating, produced an invitation also, from another quarter, for the following Sabbath. To these solicitations, we may suppose without much reluctance, he complied; and he preached again on the morning of July 12th, at a village called *Broughin*. His text on this occasion was Col. iii. 3, '*Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*' In the afternoon and evening of the same day, he preached again at *Collier's End*. In the afternoon from Acts xix. 2, '*Have ye received the Holy Ghost?*' In the evening from Phil. iii. 18, '*They are the enemies of the cross of Christ.*' The attendance at *Collier's End* was, on this second Sabbath, so much increased, that the room would scarcely contain the people who were desirous of hearing, and every one seemed still more deeply affected by the impressive manner, the solemn doctrines, and the surprising powers of this young divine. On the following Thursday he preached again at a place called *Brickenden*, from John iv. 29, '*Come see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?*' On Sunday, July 19th, he again resumed his labours at *Collier's End*, and preached in the afternoon from 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13, '*And when he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God;*

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and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him, and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem, and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.' In the evening the multitude that assembled was so great, that to gratify them all, he was under the necessity of preaching out of doors, which he did with great animation and effect, from Rom. xiv. 12, '*So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*' It appears from the report of one who was present at the delivery of this sermon, that it was remarkably impressive. Although surrounded by so great a crowd, he seemed quite undaunted, and expressed himself with an ease and an energy which produced the most serious impressions upon many, and excited the astonishment of all. To see the old and grey-headed melted into tears beneath the simple touches and fervent appeals of a youth, but little more than sixteen years of age, proclaiming with the boldness and propriety of an experienced veteran the glorious gospel of the blessed God, must have been truly interesting. And it is also gratifying to know, that by the earliest labours of this excellent youth, happy and saving effects were produced, which remain to this day. On the evening of Thursday, July 23d, he preached at *Buntingford*, a town about ten miles from Hertford, from John x. 9, '*By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*' On Sunday, July 26th, he preached again, afternoon and evening, at *Collier's End.* In the afternoon from John vi. 44, '*No man can come to me except the Father which sent*

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me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.' In the evening from 2 Tim. ii. 19, '*Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his, and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*' On the Wednesday evening following he preached at *Hormead*, from Psalm iv. 6, '*There be many that say, who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.*' And on the Thursday evening again at *Brickenden*. At *Hormead* his congregation amounted to six or seven hundred persons, and the place where they were assembled was a barn.* Indeed by this time his fame had so widely circulated, that wherever he preached,

* The circumstance of Mr. Spencer's preaching in a *barn*, and in the *open air*, may perhaps excite unpleasant feelings in the breasts of some who, having occasionally heard him with delight, may honour these pages with a perusal. They may feel regret, perhaps, that he should ever have been so irregular, or have ever trodden in the steps of men, who are universally condemned as enthusiasts and fanatics. It is necessary, therefore, in order to vindicate him, and all who have been guilty of a similar offence against the laws of *ecclesiastical decorum*, from the charge of enthusiasm and fanaticism, to produce some passages of scripture, by which their conduct, in this respect, is fully justified: '*Howbeit, the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands.*'—Acts vii. 48. '*Where* (whether in a *field*, a *barn*, or a *temple*,) *two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*'—Mat. xviii. 20. '*Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in.*'—Luke xiv. 23. The most impressive sermon ever preached was delivered in the open air, upon a mount. And the wilderness of Judea was the scene of his ministry, who was honoured to be the forerunner of the Messiah.

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numbers flocked from all parts to hear and see this wonderful youth; and he might have preached every day in the week, had he been so inclined, so numerous were the invitations that crowded upon him. However, his vacation drew towards a close; and his return to Hoxton suspended for awhile these public exercises. He preached on the evening of Sunday, Aug. 2d, at *Roydon*; and we hear no more of his preaching till December. It certainly admits of doubt, whether these early exercises in public preaching are beneficial or injurious. That they are injurious, may be argued from the circumstance, that they tend to elate and dissipate the mind—to inspire it with conceited notions of its own superior powers—too soon, alas! to familiarize the ear to the insinuating sounds of flattery, and, investing the youth with high conceptions of his present qualifications, to annihilate those humiliating views of his own ignorance and imperfection,—and that ardent panting after knowledge in which lies the great source of respectability and usefulness in after life. Not to notice those practical errors into which the ignorance and incaution natural to youth may lead him, when engaged in directing men in affairs of infinite and eternal moment. If the aged evangelist,—the venerable pastor, is heard so frequently to deplore his imperfection and lament the *possibility* of error in his public instructions—a young man may well proceed in his early labours with caution, and had need to be possessed of no common discretion and knowledge, to counteract the suspicions necessarily excited, in the breasts of the thoughtful, by his youth.

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But perhaps, on the other hand, there are peculiar advantages connected with an early entrance on the work of preaching. The novelty of the circumstance excites attention, and many are converted, who, but for the juvenility of the preacher, had never heard the gospel from his lips, and this is doubtless amongst the many *means* which an Infinite Wisdom has selected, for accomplishing, in the conversion of sinners, the purposes of an infinite love. Besides that on the preacher's own mind, his early employment in ministerial labour may have a most happy influence. By an early initiation into the difficulties and trials of the work, he may attain an ease and a skill in its execution, which is perhaps but seldom reached by the man who has commenced much later in the day. In youth the mind is all activity, and difficulties which are met with then are far more easily surmounted than when they are presented to the opposition of maturer age. But after all, much depends upon the peculiar circumstances of the individual case. Many a man is better prepared for the work of the ministry at sixteen than others are at forty; and whilst the popularity and flattery which usually attend the course of youthful preachers would be the ruin of some, there are others indued with a prudence and a piety sufficient to resist their influence. And be it remembered, that the time allotted to every man for labour is at best but *short*, and that for many of our ministers—alas! that these should be, for the most part the most eminent and useful!—is prepared an early grave! To be squandering away the precious time which ought to be devoted to

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the salvation of immortal souls, in the acquisition of profound and extensive erudition; to be immured for years in the walls of a study, and confined to the precincts of a college, impairing the physical strength by midnight application, and smothering the flames of holy zeal amid the ices of metaphysics and the lumber of heathenish philosophy, whilst thousands of immortal souls are perishing, to whose eternal interest those years might be successfully devoted—is certainly a conduct highly culpable, and not in the spirit of Him who said—'*work whilst it is day, for the night cometh, when no man can work!*' Far be it from the writer of this volume in any way to undervalue or decry that knowledge, which, in a minister of the gospel, the circumstances of the present times render so essential.—These remarks only apply to those cases in which years are expended in adding to a stock already more than sufficient for present purposes, without beginning to apply to any practical use that which is so largely possessed; and may affect such institutions as, having for their object the preparation of young men for the work of the ministry, suffer the zeal for God, and the love of souls, which led them to its patronage, at least to lose a little of its fire by years of dry scholastic disquisition, ere they are suffered to go forth into the world and expend them on their proper object—the conversion of their dying fellow men.

With respect to Mr. Spencer, the world will judge whether he began to preach too soon or not. I believe that Liverpool, by far the most competent to judge in this case, will, without hesitation, decide

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in the negative. Perhaps there are, who may be disposed to say, "this was an exception."—Granted;—but in such exceptions, let a similar liberty be allowed. Where extraordinary gifts, attended by extraordinary grace, so early develope themselves, allow them a proportionably early exercise, nor rob the church of God of an useful minister, who, ere the period a cautious policy has fixed for the commencement of his labour is arrived—may be summoned to his rest.

On his return to Hoxton we find Mr. Spencer preaching occasionally in the work-houses—an admirable school for young divines. Surely this is no inconsiderable circumstance in which our dissenting colleges are superior as schools of practical divinity, to those of the establishment. There the student emerges at once from the retirement of private life to all the publicity of the sacred office; which sudden transition, to a delicate mind, must often be attended with considerable pain, and may lead, in the first few instances, to a confusion and embarrassment most distressing to himself, and most unfriendly to his prospects of future respectability and usefulness. On the other hand, with us the student *gradually*, almost *imperceptibly*, glides into the ministry, and by continued, but slow enlargement, of the sphere in which he is allowed to move, he rises from a few poor people in a work-house, to address the most respectable auditories.

On his return to his father's house, for the Christmas vacation, Mr. Spencer preached for the first time at Hertford. It did not happen to him, as is often the case, that he had no honour in his own

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country. Numbers pressed, urged no doubt, in the first instance, by curiosity, to hear him; and those who are accustomed to mark the influence of similar circumstances upon a susceptible mind, will enter a little into his emotions, when rising to address, upon the most solemn of all subjects, a vast multitude of his fellow-townsmen, amongst whom he recognised many of his juvenile companions—the several members of his own family—and, not the least interesting object in the groupe, the venerable matron who had early instructed him in the principles of his mother tongue, and whose lot it was to observe the first faint dawnings of a talent, then fast hastening to its fullest exercise and strength. But long after the influence of novelty may be supposed to have subsided, he continued to excite the admiration of his native town. His first sermon at Hertford was preached on the evening of Sunday, December 20th, at the Rev. Mr. Maslin's chapel, from Eph. v. 11, '*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.*' He preached again on the Wednesday evening following, and on the evening of Christmas day, on which occasion his text was, Mich. v. 2, '*But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.*'

The passages of scripture selected by Mr. Spencer, as the subjects of his earliest discourses, afford another demonstration, in addition to many others, of the general bias of his mind. They are such as one may well imagine a preacher panting for

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the salvation of his fellow men, would select for the commencement of his public labours. The topics which they suggest are of all others the most solemn, as they are the most simple and the most important in the whole range of inspired truth, and hence they were best adapted to the preacher's age, and the unlettered character of his auditors. It seems, that in his earliest sermons there was nothing of that parade and glare—nothing of that excessive fondness of figures and love of imagery, which too often mark the first compositions of youthful preachers—preachers who, in a more advanced stage of their ministry, have not been less respectable or useful than he.

Whether this is to be considered as an excellence or defect, it is probable, with some, may be a matter of debate. Dr. Blair, (or rather Quintilian, from whom he copies,*) in his remarks on the early compositions of public speakers, urges in favour of that exuberance of imagination and excess of ornament,—that time and experience will prune all this away, and in proportion as the fire of youth declines, the glare of the composition will sink into the settled lustre of maturer age. And hence he argues, for an excessive indulgence of the imagination at this period; since by the time the powers are called into full and steady exercise, they will have undergone a certain train of discipline, and have found their proper limits; but if the com-

* Quintilian again quotes from Cicero, the great master of eloquence; whose remarks on this subject are worthy his immortal pen.—Vid. Quint. Just. Orat. lib. 11. ch. 4. et Cicero de Orat. lib. 11. ch. 21.

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position has all the judicious sobriety of that maturer age, amid the vigour and vivacity of youth, what is it likely to be in the more advanced stages of its exercise, but cold, insipid, and dull.

But surely all depends upon the nature of the subject, and the source whence the public orator is to draw the energy which must give animation to his discourses. The fire of genius, the glow of imagination, must be the enkindling torches in the senate—at the bar; but though not altogether useless in the pulpit, yet they are not the lawful sources of animation there. It is not the blaze of genius, or the glow of imagination; but the sacred flame of fervent piety,—the holy kindlings of a mind moved by principles derived from heaven, and the generous efforts of a soul impelled by an intense desire for the salvation of a dying world, that must impart life and energy to the correct, but glowing statements,—the warm and empassioned appeals of the ambassador for Christ. Other sources of animation may be exhausted by exercise, and dried up by time; but this can never fail. It will remain the same when the head of the venerable prophet is covered with hoary hairs, and the body is sunk in the decrepitude of age. Nay, as in the case of the apostle Paul, it will rise into brighter radiance as he advances to the termination of his course,—a more ardent panting for the salvation of mankind will mark his dying hours, than that which attended his entrance on his labours; and with David, the last prayer his spirit breathes will be for the universal diffusion of that gospel, which it has been the business and

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the honour of his life to preach—'*Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen.*'

We now arrive at a period in Mr. Spencer's history, peculiarly critical and important.——During the vacation of Christmas, 1807, the Rev. Mr. Leifchild, of Kensington, was supplying the pulpit at Hoxton chapel. One Sabbath afternoon, in January, Mr. Spencer being then returned to the academy from Hertford, Mr. L. expressed a wish that he should assist him, in the public service, by reading the scriptures and engaging in prayer. The request was granted, and an extract of a letter obligingly addressed by that gentleman to me, will convey a lively picture of the deep impression which his appearance and manner produced upon the large congregation before whom he stood.

"—— But when he appeared in the pulpit—after the first emotions of surprise were over, and after the mistakes of some, who supposed that he was a little boy belonging to the gallery, who, from ignorance or thoughtlessness, had gone up the pulpit stairs, instead of those leading to his seat had been corrected, so sweetly did he read the chapter,* so

* On the evening of the following Sunday, Mr. L. addressed young people; when Mr. Spencer again conducted the devotional part of the service. The chapter which he then read was Ecclesiastes xii. A person since received into the church at Hoxton, dated her first serious impressions from the reading of that chapter, and the solemn prayer then offered up.

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earnestly, so scripturally, so experimentally, did he engage in prayer, that for the whole six Sabbaths afterwards he became the chief magnet of attraction to the place. The people now insisted upon it he should preach. I need not name his subsequent success."

The entreaties of the people having prevailed, Mr. Spencer, though contrary to the standing order of the institution, was allowed to preach. It was a delicate situation. Yet it was one to which he had long and anxiously aspired. Indeed, so strong was his desire for the public engagements of the ministry, that the fear of being long denied the gratification of his wishes, on account of his youth, actually preyed upon his spirits so severely as even to affect his health. But it was not from the love of fame or popular applause that he cherished this desire, but from the hope of being early and extensively useful;—as if urged by a presentiment of his impending fate—immediately to commence those honourable labours from which he was to be called so soon.—When he appeared in the pulpit at Hoxton, a youth just seventeen years of age, he betrayed none of that distressing anxiety which marks the candidate for public approbation; but stood with all the dignified composure, and spoke with all the unembarrassed energy of an ambassador for Christ. His text was, Psalm xxxii. 6, '*For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found; surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto thee!*' At the close of his discourse, the sentiments which dwelt upon the lips and countenances of his auditors were those

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of pleasure, admiration, and surprise. His excessive youth—the simplicity of his appearance—the modest dignity of his manner—the sweetness of his voice—the weight and importance of his doctrine—and the force—the affection—and the fervour with which he directed it, to the hearts and consciences of those who heard him—charmed and delighted, whilst they edified. And retiring from the sanctuary to the social circle, they dwelt alternately on the loveliness of the preacher, and the importance of the truths which they had heard from his lips.

Upon this scene the Christian student may, with advantage, pause and meditate. Looking forward, perhaps with considerable apprehension, to the period of his public entrance on the labours of the ministry, he may be anxious to ascertain what was the secret spring—the hidden source, of that calm composure and unfettered boldness, which characterised the earliest addresses of this interesting youth. To such then I can confidently say,—it was not the proud consciousness of superior powers,—of erudition—of genius, or of eloquence; but it was the influence of a heart warmed with the love of Christ, big with the vast moment of his solemn theme, and panting with an ardour which no circumstances of difficulty could suppress, for the salvation of sinners. Such an influence as this will make the coward bold, and convert the most timid and feeble into valiant and successful champions of the cross. Before an influence like this, the love of fame,—the glare of popularity, the opinions and the plaudits of mankind retire. No consideration remains but that of the worth of immortal souls,

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and the importance of their salvation. This, under the agency of the eternal Spirit, whose assistance every faithful minister may with confidence expect, will supply a closeness of appeal to arrest the attention—furnish topics of discourse to inform the judgment, and animated expostulations to warm the heart. When the blaze of genius and of oratory is extinguished, this will continue with a steady flame. And whilst many, his acknowledged superiors in talent and in literature, are left behind, the preacher in whose breast it glows will be conducted to scenes of extensive usefulness, and the enjoyment of an honourable renown.

Mr. Spencer now became the topic of general discourse,—the subject of universal inquiry. His name spread far and wide. His danger became daily more and more imminent. Letters pressed upon him, filled with flattery—invitations arrived at the academy from all parts, for his services; and he appeared, as a friend, who witnessed his sudden and extraordinary elevation, observed, like one standing on the brow of a precipice, amid the most violent gusts of wind. Disapprobation cannot be expressed in terms too strong of the conduct which is usually adopted by the religious public towards their favourite, and especially their youthful preachers. And the censure which may, in a lamentable degree admit of un' ersal application, falls with pre-eminent propriety on the professors of religion in the metropolis and its neighbourhood. There, indeed, by the constant accession of fresh objects, to the sphere in which they move, such a love of novelty—such a fondness of variety—such a taste for something per-

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petually original—is excited and constantly fed—that whatever is uniform and solid, in the ministry of their established and experienced pastors, while it secures the attention and regard of the judicious and discerning, is too often neglected as stale and insipid by the more *lively* and *enlightened* class of hearers. A new name is announced on the cover of a Magazine, or from the pulpit of some celebrated chapel, and thither the unstable multitude direct their steps.—They sit in solemn judgment on the preacher's manner—his appearance—his action, and his voice; for amongst too many, alas! it is to be lamented, that the solemn truths which he delivers are but secondary objects of regard. If there should be nothing striking in his manner—nothing melodious in his voice,—nothing singular in his appearance—nothing peculiar in his system—and nothing particularly favourable in the circumstances of his introduction to the pulpits of the metropolis, there he may continue his appointed period, and when it has expired, return to the peaceful village or the quiet town, where it is his lot to labour—

"The world forgetting—by the world forgot."

On the other hand, with this class of hearers the preacher who secures their admiration instantly becomes their idol. As if irresistibly impelled to extremes, they lavish on him the warmest eulogies and adulation, often too palpable to be endured. Forgetting that he is a man of like passions with themselves, they heap their honours on his head as though he could remain insensible to the plaudits they bestow, and perfectly superior to the influence

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of every principle of pride. The following lines of the inimitable Cowper too well express the sentiments which in these remarks must suggest themselves to every thinking mind, not to obtain insertion here:—

"O Popular Applause! what heart of man
Is proof against thy sweet seducing charms?
The wisest and the best feel urgent need
Of all their caution in thy gentlest gales;
But swell'd into a gust—who then, alas!
With all his canvass spread and inexpert,
And therefore heedless, can withstand thy power?
Praise from the rivell'd lips of worthless bald
Decrepitude, and in the looks of lean
And craving Poverty, and in the bow
Respectful of the smutch'd artificer,
Is oft too welcome, and may much disturb
The bias of the purpose. How much more
Pour'd forth by beauty splendid and polite,
In language soft as Adoration breathes?
Ah spare your Idol! think him human still.
Charms he may have, but he has frailties too.
Dote not too much, nor spoil what ye admire."

But the preaching of Mr. Spencer, even in his earliest discourses, was not of that light and meretricious kind which may secure the temporary* ad-

* I believe that general experience will justify the observation, that however attendant circumstances may contribute, in the first instance, to render an individual popular, nothing but sterling worth can secure its perpetuity; and whenever the preaching of a popular minister has endured, without injury to his reputation, the ordeal of a ten or twenty years trial, he may safely be regarded as possessing an excellence superior to any thing his *manner* could exhibit. But I feel the delicacy of the topic I have thus ventured to introduce,

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miration of the wandering and unsettled. It possessed much of the solid,—the experimental, and judicious; and this secured him the attention and esteem of those, whose approbation any man would esteem it an honour to possess. But this only tended to heighten his danger. God, however, gave him grace equal to his day. His letters during his popularity in London breathe the same spirit of humility as that which marked his earlier correspondence; and a piety seldom surpassed in fervour and sincerity tended to preserve him steady in the midst of that tempestuous sea, upon whose billows, though young and inexperienced, it was his lot to ride.

Numerous and pressing however as were the invitations from different parts of the metropolis and its neighbourhood, yet Mr. Spencer did not preach again in London (except in the work-houses, which the students regularly supplied, and also once in a small chapel in Hackney Road) until September. In the meanwhile his talent for preaching had ample exercise in various parts of the country, which during this period he was allowed to visit. So that, from January 7th to September 8th he preached no less than sixty times. The following are the principal places which were then favoured with his labours:—*Roydon*, *Godmanchester*, *Ripton*, *Bunting-*

and gladly refer to illustrations of the same subject by more experienced and far abler hands.—*See Fuller's Life of Pearce; and Jay's Life of Cornelius Winter.* Books in which examples, the one of more public, the other of more retired, but not less transcendant excellence, seem to live before us for our instruction. To every student for the Christian ministry they must prove an invaluable treasure.

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ford, Hertford, Dorking, Rumford, Harlow, Royston, Hadham, Hays, Chigwell, and *Mill-Hill.* At all these places the attention he excited was considerable, and the impression he left remains with the people to this day.*

Mr. Spencer's second sermon at Hoxton chapel was delivered on the evening of Thursday, September 8th. It confirmed the opinion of his excellence produced by the first. His text was, Acts x. 36, '*He is Lord of all.*'

The general sentiment of approbation and delight at first excited by his youthful appearance and his extraordinary pulpit talents, was now deepened and established, and he began to preach pretty extensively in the pulpits of the metropolis and its neighbourhood. On Sunday, September 18th, we find him in the pulpit at Holywell Mount chapel, and on the Sunday following in that at Kennington chapel; and on the afternoon of Sunday, December 13th, he supplied the chapel in Old Gravel Lane, Wapping.† During the autumn of this year he also visited several parts of the country immediately surrounding London; and he preached, among other places, at *Upminster, Upsom, Guildford, Roydon,* and *High Wycombe.*

With respect to the wisdom and propriety of permitting such extensive public labours, in one so

* For specimens of his early pulpit compositions, see Appendix, No. II.

† The church assembling in Old Gravel Lane formerly sat under the ministry of the late Rev. Noah Hill, but now enjoy the pastoral care of the Rev. Mr. Hooper, one of the tutors in the college at Hoxton.

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young, and at so early a stage of his academical course, there will be perhaps a diversity of opinion. On the *general* question, in which this is but an individual case, there can be but one sentiment. Nothing tends more to dissipate the mind, than much travelling and much society; and particularly injurious to the fixed and laborious habits of a student's life is that kind of intercourse with society, which the young minister, in his occasional visits, usually obtains. The esteem in which, for the most part the name of a minister is held, in the circles which he enters, secures him an attention and an ease by far too flattering not to be injurious; whilst the refined and fascinating manners of some societies but ill prepare the mind for the imperatively severe characters of academic life. But perhaps a far more serious object of regard is the time which is thus necessarily and irretrievably lost to the great and avowed object of his pursuit.—It is impossible to take a review of the past year of Mr. Spencer's life, and number up the several places at which he has preached—at some of them two or three times, whilst others he visited more than once, calculating their respective distances from Hoxton, and the time necessarily occupied in travelling, together with the many hours, perhaps days, which must have been consumed in preparing the discourses there delivered—without being struck with a conviction, of the immense loss which in a literary point of view he must have sustained; and the pursuit of literature is, after all, the professed object of our dissenting colleges. Considering too, that this was but Mr. Spencer's second year of stu-

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dy, and connecting this with the shortness of the term he had to stay, and his exceeding youth, the impression is yet deepened. But Mr. Spencer's was an extraordinary case. His *fort* was the composition and delivery of sermons. He was at home and happy only in this sacred work. He seemed but to live for this object. Other objects he might contemplate, with respect and even esteem, excited by an impression of their utility and excellence—on this his heart perpetually dwelt with a fervent and impassioned love. It was evidently for this God had especially designed him; and for the work he had to accomplish, and the early account he had to render,—all perhaps are now convinced that *he* was not suffered to begin too soon. For one whose day of usefulness has proved so short, and over whom the night of death so early and so suddenly has shed its gloom, we cannot but rejoice that the first dawn was devoted to his honourable labour, and not even a solitary hour neglected, from the commencement to the termination of his career.*

Mr. Spencer preached again at Hoxton chapel on Christmas day, morning and evening; and also delivered an address, on the following evening, at

* A contemplation of the facts connected with the interesting, but melancholy history of Spencer, may however tend to shew, that, whilst much preaching and much travelling are to be depricated as evils, especially in the earlier stages of a student's course, yet that no specific rules can be established in this case for *universal* and *invariable* application. On the propriety of the thing, in every case of students under their care, the TUTORS are the best qualified to decide.

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the prayer meeting. A day or two after he left London for *Brighton*, and preached his first sermon in that celebrated seat of gaiety and fashion on the evening of Thursday, December 29th, at the Countess of Huntingdon's chapel, from Zach. vi. 12, '*Behold the man whose name is the branch, and he shall build the temple of the Lord.*' On Sunday, 1st January, 1805, he preached in the afternoon at the Rev. Mr. Styles' chapel, and again in the evening at the Countess'.

I am the more particular in marking the date of his first visit to Brighton, as it commences a new year, and forms also a most important epoch in his history. The interesting and endeared connexions which he afterwards formed there, tend to throw a new and brilliant light upon his character; whilst they shed a softer air of melancholy around the circumstances of his early and lamented fate !*

Alas! of what moment to the Christian minister is the formation of connexions such as these. Delicate as the subject may be, and ill qualified as I feel I am to enter fully into its discussion, I yet cannot suffer it to pass without some observations on its vast importance.—By imprudence here, how many have destroyed, if not their *character*, yet to an alarming extent their *usefulness* and *comfort*. Upon the partner which a minister selects much of his happiness depends. He must be indeed a child of

* Those who knew Spencer, will enter fully into the meaning of this paragraph. I owe it however to those who knew him not to say, that tenderness to feelings I should dread to wound, compels me to draw a veil over one of the most interesting scenes of his life.

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sorrow, who with a heart broken by disappointment, and a brow clouded by care—such cares and disappointments as too frequently impart a character of gloom to many a pious pastor's life—finds no relief in his domestic circle, and seeks in vain for the soothing influence of sympathy in the individual whom he has chosen to be a '*help meet for him.*'

The important subject thus reluctantly though unavoidably introduced, distributes itself into many branches, each interesting in its kind, on each of which age and experience might with considerable propriety descant; and however unwilling I might be to enter more largely into the discussion, yet did I think myself sufficiently possessed of either, I would certainly reprobate in the severest terms that rash and thoughtless haste which too often marks the decision of students and youthful ministers in this respect, and which too frequently leads to settled distress,—final ruin,—or shameful infidelity! To the honour of Spencer be it recorded, that his choice in the first instance displayed his *wisdom:* his uniform attachment until death,—his *constancy!*

Mr. Spencer preached again at the Countess of Huntingdon's chapel at Brighton on Thursday evening, January 5th, and left that place on the following day. On the ensuing Sunday he preached at Holloway, morning and afternoon; and on the evening of Tuesday the 10th, addressed an immense congregation from the pulpit of that truly excellent man the Rev. Rowland Hill, at Surry chapel. The subject of his discourse was Deut. xxxiii. 3, '*Yea he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand, and they sat down at thy feet, every one shall receive of thy words!*'

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Between this date and the following midsummer, his labours appear to have been, in point both of number and success, truly astonishing. He now preached much in and about London, and wherever his name was announced, the crowd that flocked to his ministry, proved how extensive and deep the impression was which it had excited. Besides occupying many of the most respectable pulpits in the metropolis, during this period, he visited and preached in the following places: *Guildford, Epsom, Worthing, Barking, Roydon, Dorking, Buntingford, Winchmore-Hill, Saffron Walden, and Hertford.*

During his stay at Worthing, which was in the month of February, he made several excursions to Brighton, which became more endeared to him by every visit. The attachment was mutual. His ministry excited universal attention: multitudes pressed to hear him. The public prints declared their admiration of his powers; and the private circle forgot the trifling topics of the day, intent upon the discussion of his rare and extraordinary talents. More especially did he bind to him, in affectionate remembrance, the hearts of the young, by the warmth, simplicity, and affection of his addresses to them: and in no place which was honoured by his labours, was his worth more fully appreciated in life, or his loss more deeply and universally lamented in death!

On the evening of Thursday, the 18th of May, he preached again at Hoxton chapel. His text on that occasion was Isaiah lxi. 10, '*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my*

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God; for he hath cloathed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.'

But by so much preaching and fatigue, his strength became exhausted and his health impaired; and during the midsummer vacation, the committee superintending the stations of the preaching students, appointed him to spend some weeks at Dorking, in Surrey, where the labour was but small, the retirement deep, the country beautiful, and the air salubrious! To this place he went in the beginning of July,—having first paid a visit to his family at Hertford, and preached again in his native town. At Dorking he was committed to the care of Mrs. Alexander, a kind and pious matron, whose hospitable attention to all the servants of Christ who have had the happiness to repose beneath her roof, renders her worthy the appropriate epithet of—"Mother in Israel." The praises of such pious women are, and ought to be, in all the churches. Happy is that congregation which possesses one or two such valuable and useful characters. To the youthful preachers who may be commissioned from their respective academies to labour for awhile in the congregations to which they belong, they often prove an inestimable blessing. By their timely assiduities, not unfrequently, diseases the most serious and alarming may be averted, by which valuable ministers might have been early snatched from the church and from the world; and, at any rate, those little offices of unaffected kindness, in the performance of which they so much excel, will tend to soothe the anxieties by which, in early life, many a delicate frame is prematurely wasted and impaired!

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For Spencer too the spot was admirably chosen. Nothing could better suit his fondness for retirement, and love of social or solitary walks. I am not a stranger to the scenery—I once visited it, like him, for relaxation; and the remembrance of those happy days, in a thousand pleasing pictures and enchanting forms, crowds at this moment on my mind. The country is sufficiently bold and varied to inspire with ideas of grandeur and magnificence, though not so romantic and vast, as to excite astonishment and terror. From the summit of abrupt and lofty hills, clothed with luxuriant foliage, the delighted eye may roam at leisure over woods and valleys, that will not yield in fruitfulness and beauty to the fairest plains of Italy; and in deep embowered glens, made cool and fragrant by meandering streams, the mind may yield to melancholy musings and to solemn thought—so unbroken is the silence,—so profound the solitude!*

* In one of these retired dells, where art has followed up the rude design of nature, a rustic temple, unadorned and simple as the genius of the place, affords to the weary wanderer its temporary rest. A grateful poet has left some tributary lines in honour of the scene, of which they are so descriptive, that I hope I shall be pardoned if I introduce them here:—

"Stranger, whencesoe'er you come,
Welcome to this rustic dome;
Welcome to the hill—the glade;
Welcome to the forest shade.

To our simple homely fare,
Come and welcome—banish care;
Climb our hills, and health inhale,
Borne upon the scented gale,

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During his stay at Dorking it was his happiness to form a friendship the most intimate and endeared with Mr. J. Haddon, of London; and on the return of that gentleman to town, Mr. Spencer began an epistolary correspondence with him, which continued till his death. A valuable assortment of these letters have been kindly put into my hands, and with the

Bury in this wooded glen,
All the cares of busy men;
While the streams that round us roll,
Sweetly murmuring, soothe the soul!

See, the glorious orb of day
Gilds us with his parting ray;
Whilst above the woods afar
Sweetly shines the Ev'ning Star.

Stranger, rest thee here awhile,
Till the morning sun shall smile,
Then explore the fairy scene,
Lovely as a waking dream.

Worn and wasted by disease,
Pale and languid—ill at ease,
Say, does health thy care employ—
Health, the fost'ring nurse of joy?

Come, and chase her on our hills;
Meet her by our purling rills;
Woo her mid our shadowing trees;
Catch her on the balmy breeze!

Health and peace, and joy are here;
Come and welcome—banish care—
Cease thy wand'rings—lose thy woes,
Yield to pleasure and repose!"

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greater part of them I shall enrich these pages. The following is, I believe, the first in the series :—

No 15.

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

Dorking, July 25th, 1809.

"MY WORTHY FRIEND,

"I know no other way of expressing the pleasure your letters and your society have afforded me, than by endeavouring to repay your kindness, or at least by shewing you that I am sensible of the obligations under which I am laid by you. The pleasant interviews, the truly social walks, and the various other enjoyments which we experienced together, have left an impression of attachment to yourself on my mind, which I am persuaded will not be easily obliterated. The country is indeed as pleasant in itself now, as it was the week before last; yet, believe me, it is not half so much enjoyed by me as it was then.—The same streams indeed glide pleasantly along—the same hills majestically rise—the same enlivening prospects strike the eye, and pervade the soul, with admiration—and every thing around me seems to say, '*Tis Surrey still;*' but there is a sad deficiency in all my perambulations—it is, 'that I am all alone.'*—Yesterday I went to Brockham;

* This is a quotation from a beautiful poem of Henry Kirke White's, to whose charming productions Spencer was most ardently attached. The poem itself so accurately describes the state of his own mind, and the melancholy

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but there was no *Haddon* to meet me on my way thither, or to return with me any part of the way

musings in which he indulged, in his solitary walks, when deprived of the pleasure of his friend's society, that I need not apologize for its introduction here :—

SOLITUDE.

IT is not that my lot is low,
That bids this silent tear to flow;
It is not grief that bids me moan,
It is, that I am all alone.

In woods and glens I love to roam,
When the tir'd hedger hies him home;
Or by the wood-land pool to rest,
When pale the star looks on its breast.

Yet when the silent ev'ning sighs,
With hallow'd airs and symphonies,
My spirit takes another tone,
And sighs that it is all alone.

The autumn leaf is sear and dead,
It floats upon the water's bed;
I would not be a leaf to die
Without recording sorrow's sigh!

The woods and winds with sullen wail,
Tell all the same unvaried tale;
I've none to smile when I am free,
And when I sigh, to sigh with me!

Yet in my dreams a form I view,
That thinks on me, and loves me too:
I start, and when the vision's flown,
I weep that I am all alone.

To these mild complainings of this sainted bard, a reply, characterised by the same tenderness of thought and ele-

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home. Last Tuesday evening Mr. Moore very politely offered to take me to Epsom, to hear Mr. Clayton the next day; which offer I most willingly accepted. On the whole, we had rather a pleasant day. Mr. George Clayton preached on Mat. xxi. 28. It may perhaps give you pleasure to hear, that I preached very comfortably last Lord's day from the new bible, which is exactly the thing. I should know very little of the trials and difficulties of life, were I always to live as I now do. I really feel sometimes as if I needed something to quicken me to diligence, and put the graces of the Spirit in exercise, which, I am afraid, were I long to glide down life's stream so easily as I now do, would begin to die. Ease is a dangerous foe to the prosperity of

gance of expression, has been furnished by the pen of Mr. Josiah Conder, of London:—

ON READING THE POEM ON SOLITUDE,

In the 2d vol. of H. K. White's Remains.

BUT art thou thus indeed alone?
Quite unbefriended—all unknown?
And hast thou then His name forgot,
Who form'd thy frame and fix'd thy lot?

Is not his voice in evening's gale?
Beams not with him the star so pale?
Is there a leaf can fade and die,
Unnoticed by his watchful eye?

Each fluttering hope, each anxious fear—
Each lonely sigh, each silent tear,
To thine Almighty Friend is known:
And say'st thou, thou art "all alone?"

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religion in the soul, and opposition of some kind is essentially necessary for us who profess a religion which is described as a race to be run; as a battle to be fought, and which is represented to us by every metaphor which gives us the idea of active labour and unceasing exertion. I hope to have the happiness of frequently meeting with you after my return to town; and I have the pleasure to inform you, that my appointments favour such intention. Mr. Wilson has written to inform me, that I shall preach in town for five Sabbaths after the vacation. The manuscripts you sent highly delight me. Mrs. Smith wishes me to leave Herbert with her, to which I know you will not object. I continue about the same in my health as I was when you left me; and am very thankful that here I have not to preach so many times as at several other places. That the good will of Him who dwelleth in the bush may ever countenance and console you; that the divine Spirit may ever lead you into all the truth; that you may possess every evidence that you have found favour in the sight of the Lord; and that Christ Jesus may be your eternal portion, is my humble, earnest prayer. Let us hope hereafter to behold his face together, in a world where we shall be liable to change and separation no more, but where we shall be enclosed in glory, changeless as his own. This is the desire of one who can truly call himself

"Your's most affectionately,
"THOMAS SPENCER."

"My kind hostess desires to be respectfully remembered to you. I expect I shall be in town next Tuesday."

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Mr. Spencer left Dorking after the last Sabbath in July, and preached the six following Sundays in and about London. The places at which he laboured during these six weeks were White-Row, Pell-street, Jewin-street, Camden chapel, Adelphi-chapel, and Hoxton-chapel. At Jewin-street he preached four Sabbaths, out of the six, afternoons and evenings. In the meanwhile his health still continued but indifferent, and indeed so much exertion both of mental and of physical strength was but ill calculated to promote its vigour. His mind however seemed every day to grow in activity and zeal. In the pulpit,—in society, he was all animation and life. Like most who are the victims of much nervous irritability, his flow of spirits was excessive, which frequently led to ungenerous and merciless observations from those, who either had not the wisdom or the candour to attribute, what might appear as levity in him, to its real cause. It is indeed an unhappy circumstance, when such is the natural tendency of a man's mental constitution, and from nothing perhaps have young ministers suffered more than from this. At the same time, it is a shame and scandal to the Christian world, that there should be so many, who, professing to be the friends of students and youthful preachers, encourage and excite this unhappy bias, for their own amusement, and are then the first to censure the youth they have betrayed!

But where such is the *natural* disposition of a pious and devoted mind, its exercise in company is often followed by the keenest anguish and the deepest melancholy, in hours of solitude and reflection. The severe and malignant censurer should remem-

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her, that he is not omnipresent; and that there may be scenes in the retired life of the character he injures, which would put him to the blush! These remarks have been suggested by some passages in the following letter.

No. 16.

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

Hoxton, August 15, 1809.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I am sorry to inform you, that it is not in my power to gratify yourself, to please our friends, or to fulfil my own wishes, by devoting any evening in the week to visiting. I really cannot do it. My engagements this week are such as peremptorily to require my continuance at home, most likely till Sabbath day, at any rate till Saturday afternoon. I am obliged to those kind friends who expressed their concern about my exertions. I feel that I am not worthy of their sympathy. May their compassion lead them to pray for me, that I may be strengthened with all might by the Spirit in my inner man; and that He whose pleasure it is to increase strength to those that have no might, would help the infirmities of one who is weaker than a bruised reed, and yet has undertaken an office, to the discharge of which an angel is incompetent. My health is certainly in a better condition than it has been, but I am afraid I am still far from well: my head frequently aches, and I

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feel a sickness in my stomach. These are some of the miseries that flesh is heir to; but it is a joyful thought, that in the kingdom of glory our bodies will be no longer susceptible of pain, nor our minds of disquietude. Perfect health, composure, and joy, will be our happy lot when we see each other in a better world. And can we not hope that we shall do this; and that forever we shall adore our common Saviour together? The leadings of his providence first brought us acquainted with each other; and the methods of his grace will, I hope, lead us on to glory, and in our way thither make us helps to each other. Pray for *me*, that my diligence may be excited; my levities checked; and my spirituality promoted. After all I say against the world, I must confess with shame that I am very like many of the men of the world in this respect; that I indulge in a lightness of disposition which is inconsistent with the character of a Christian, and makes us resemble those who never think of eternity and the solemnities of religion. Ah! my dear friend and brother, I have experienced in my short life many a bitter hour, occasioned by my own folly in this respect. But what a scandal is it to a professing Christian, that natural dispositions and surrounding temptations should overcome a principle of grace in the heart—a principle which ought ever to operate powerfully in weaning us from folly, and making us every day more and more serious and holy. Never do you be afraid of cautioning, or reproving me, but give me opportunity to prove that '*Faithful are the words of a friend!*' I have felt more, in reference to

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yourself, than I have ever yet expressed. More affection for you; more gratitude that Providence placed you in my way; and more determination to make you my counsellor and friend—than I have ever yet told you. The Lord help us to strengthen each other's hands in his good ways. I shall not like your letters so well if you do not direct them yourself. This you will say is folly, but I cannot help it. Adieu!

"Your's affectionately,

"THOS. SPENCER."

"N. B. Saturday afternoon, if possible, I will see you."

The history of the following month is from the pen of his most intimate friend.

"At his return [from Dorking] he supplied Jewin-street meeting for a month, in the afternoons and evenings, where the attention he excited will not be easily forgotten. Before he left, numbers could not get admittance. The church were very anxious that he should settle among them,* but their desire could not be complied with. I have heard him blamed respecting that business; but it was only by those who did not know the circumstances of the case. I was in the possession of his heart in that affair, and it would be unjust to his memory not to declare, that he was free from blame. His

* The church was then under the pastoral care of the Rev. Timothy Priestley, a truly venerable divine, whose age and infirmities rendered the aid of a colleague necessary.

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affectionate spirit keenly felt for them in their disappointment. 'The good people at Jewin-street,' said he, in a letter to me, 'have a strong claim upon our prayers;' and it was to sooth their minds that he composed his sermon upon Isaiah xxxiii. 20. The time of his supplying at Jewin-street was very pleasant to me. I claimed the whole of his time between and after the services, which inclined him to enjoy that retirement which was so congenial to his lowly soul. When going to preach no one saw him.—I used to knock at his door—give in his refreshment—and watch the time for him.—It was from the mount of communion that he always went to the pulpit, and this caused his sermons to shine gloriously.—Frequently in passing to the house of God we kept perfect silence, while his mind has been so entirely absorbed, that I have found a necessity for guiding him; and after worship he loved to stop as long as he conveniently could, that he might pass away unnoticed.—But such was the character of Spencer—his deep humility—fervent piety—and amiable simplicity, that I am fully convinced it cannot be fairly stated without suspicion of exaggeration; and I must confess, that I should have found great difficulty in giving fallen nature credit for the excellencies, which, from the closest inspection I saw resident in that truly illustrious and holy youth."

The following letter, written on the Saturday previous to the last Sabbath of his supplying Jewin-street chapel, discloses his feelings with respect to the church in that place, and will prove to the peo-

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ple with how much affection he wrote and thought of them. Nor will it be less valuable for the spirit of filial love and duty which it breathes.

No. 17.

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

September 2, 1809.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"Truly sorry am I in any case to disappoint you, and yet it must be so as it respects this evening.—Before seven o'clock I am necessitated to go from home, nor can I return till late in the evening. You ask, 'can you not give up this engagement?' I answer, this is impossible; because nothing short of *filial* duty is the cause of my absence from home. This morning I received a letter from my dear father, telling me that he must be in town to-day, although he has been travelling in the country all the week, and he wishes me to meet him this evening, at half-past six o'clock. This, I am sure will be regarded as a sufficient reason by you, and nothing short of such a reason could induce me to go out at all this evening, for to tell you the truth, I am very unwell. My head and my side have suffered exceedingly for a day or two past, more especially to-day. Nor are my prospects of the morrow of the most enlivening kind. In fact, too, my spirits are very low. The sight of my aged parent may perhaps revive them, and make '*my heart rejoice, even mine!*' Mr. W. has just told me, that he has informed Mr. S. that I cannot supply them any long-

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or than to-morrow. The opinion of the committee, &c. goes against them! For my part, I can only say, '*My God, thy will be done!*' You will see me at Jewin-street in the afternoon, but whether able or incapacitated to perform my duty there, I know not. Pray for me, that much grace may communicate to me sufficient strength.

"Whether well or ill, cheerful or melancholy, I am your's affectionately,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

Having completed his engagements at Jewin-street, Spencer's labours became again miscellaneous and widely diffused. On Sabbath day the 17th, he preached at Roydon, a village near Hertford, when he availed himself of the opportunity which this appointment afforded him of visiting his family. I cannot but conceive the bliss which such occasional interviews would cause in that little circle, which had once the happiness to call him their's. To them the recollection of those happy hours devoted to social or sacred intercourse with their departed friend, must yield a soothing, though a melancholy pleasure. Nor is the reflection less honourable to his memory, than it is consolatory to their minds. In the midst of the unbounded popularity which he enjoyed—surrounded by new and splendid connexions—the admiration of listening crowds, each eager to express his approbation—all ambitious of his friendship—he ever thought with the warmest affection upon those whom he had left in that obscurity from which he had himself emerged.—Gladly did he seize the opportunity, when it occurred, of retiring

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from the public eye to taste again the tranquil pleasures of his home, and enjoy the interchange of all those sacred and delightful feelings, which strengthen and endear the ties and obligations of social or domestic life.—He was not unduly elated by his popularity. In his new associations he did not forget his kindred and his father's house.—His family did not sink in his regard, in proportion as he rose to eminence. The voice of universal praise did not drown the milder whispers of paternal love.—But in a heart whose best affections were devoted to the noblest objects, and to which new scenes of exertion were perpetually unfolding, the family at Hertford held an honourable and distinguished place. The most extensive public engagements, are not incompatible with the retired duties of private life—and the cares and responsibilities of the most laborious ministry may be sustained and discharged, without absorbing those affectionate regards so justly claimed by parental kindness and fraternal love. 'Tis true, that as a Christian, and in his official capacity, every believer in Jesus is to the faithful minister a father—a mother—a sister—and a brother. But as a *man* the relations of life exist for him—and the feelings of humanity must be common to him too. A heart from which these ties are rudely severed—is but ill adapted to that soothing influence by which the office of the ministry becomes a source of comfort to the wretched;—and a man whose bosom is a stranger to the tender sympathies of human life—alike insensible to joy or sorrow—may with propriety administer the cold rites of a Stoical philosophy—but must ever be a living contrast to

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the religion of Jesus—a system whose characteristic spirit is that of the purest and tenderest philanthropy.

Before his departure for Roydon, the following letter was addressed by Mr. Spencer to his friend. The observations at the beginning upon Christian boldness are judicious—and, though ignorant of the particular circumstances which might have called them forth, cannot fail to prove interesting and instructive.

No. 18.

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

Thursday Evening, Sept. 14, 1809.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I know you wish me to write you a great deal; but I must plead the old excuse—want of time; for I find that ———, instead of calling to-morrow morning, must have this directly, and I have but this minute left the chapel. You tell me your 'mind recoils from public duty, however plain and clear,' and you need not to be told that this is a pity; and in this respect you do not display that Christian boldness which is after all consistent with genuine humility—which the apostles displayed and enforced—which the Bible every where recommends—and which is well calculated to evidence our decided attachment to Jesus and his cause. It shall be my part, however, not to reproach you for the want of it, but to carry your wants before our Father's throne, and entreat him to fill you with all holy

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boldness and Christian courage; whilst at the same time I would most earnestly entreat you to consider the foolishness of your fears: the little need we have to seek to please our fellow-creatures, or to dread them, and above all the constant inspection of Him who said, *whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before his holy angels.* But I am persuaded that you are *not* ashamed of Jesus; yet there is great need for us all to ask ourselves repeatedly, 'am I fully on the Lord's side?' because this very examination itself produces the best effects, as it prompts us to give evidence before others of the reality of our hope, and it brings us near to God, who can make us strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and faithful even unto death. Your letters always affect me; your company you know delights me; and what shall I say of your attachment to me, but *that it meets return.* I am often indeed induced to believe that you are too careful of me, and too much concerned about me. Expressions of gratitude on my part from my mouth or pen I know you do not want, therefore I shall not trouble you with them. My mind is perfectly at ease about the present or future laws of the house, as well as about any situation after I have filled it. O that I may be stayed on God! I often think what a pity it will be, if from our friendship there should arise no good effect; however here I am wrong, because I am myself a witness that good effects have arisen to *me;* but I long that to us there may be opened fresh sources of comfort and joy in God, and that we may then be made abundant blessings to each other.—I am going

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to preach next Sabbath at Roydon, a village near Hertford, where I have reason to hope God has owned and blessed my unworthy labours before. May he do so again. Perhaps I may go to Hertford tomorrow afternoon, as it was the place of my nativity, and is now the residence of my dear father, my sisters, brother, and mother-in-law. I could say much more, (though in the same feeble and desultory style) but you perceive my paper is full. I cannot expect to see you at all till Tuesday. The coach comes in town on Monday evening, about half past six. If I can, I will walk then to Fleet-street.

"Adieu, my dear friend,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

.....

From this period to that of his first visit to Liverpool, I am not in possession of any remarkable occurrences in Mr. Spencer's history. At any rate, I am aware of none which tend to illustrate any particular feature of his character—or of such a nature as to warrant their publication to the world. But there yet remain many interesting letters to his friend, Mr. Haddon, which will tend very much to supply the want of a connected narrative—and that friend who during this period, enjoyed the most intimate acquaintance with him—and obtained a most accurate knowledge of his character, has furnished me with a series of anecdotes and observations, which will make the reader familiar with the man, —and most strikingly exhibit the holy, humble and fervent bias of his mind. For the present I shall

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content myself with making a selection from these letters, with such occasional remarks as may be necessary to illustrate their subjects or occasions; whilst the characteristic sketches above alluded to, will occupy some of the succeeding pages.

No. 19.

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

Hoxton, Oct. 12, 1809.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"With pleasure it is that I inform you, that I am appointed for *Vauxhall.* I feel pleasure, because this assignation gives us another opportunity of enjoying each other's society. I have not yet written to those friends in the country, but intend doing it to-morrow. May the young lady die in such a peaceful and happy state of mind, as shall, instead of suffering the survivors to sorrow as those who have no hope, rather give them to say—*Behold how he loved her!* I mentioned the circumstance to Mr. W. at the same time stating the wish of the Roydon people that I might supply them on Sabbath day. He told me it could not be complied with, assigning as a reason, that I was given out at Vauxhall. As the affair now stands, I am quite satisfied, because I wish to resolve all my appointments into the will of the Head of the Church.—'Where He appoints, I'll go.'—Of all evils, I pray to be particularly delivered from leaning to my own understanding, and indulging my own wayward will. May obstinacy never

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characterize me. May grace always be given me to suppress it when it rises.—To these requests I know, that from your inmost soul you say, *Amen.* One of our fellow students has just delivered us a good sermon from—'*The righteous hath hope in his death.*'—I enjoyed his sermon much more than I generally do those which are delivered to us on a Thursday evening. This was so experimental—so scriptural—so pious, that it found its way to my heart. May you and I, whenever we shall come to die, have a lively, a sure and a certain hope of reigning in life by Jesus Christ. Whilst so many are called away around us, surely we should recollect the uncertainty of our own continuance upon earth; and as death is still potent, still inexorable, and still delights to surprise, let it be our chief concern to have an interest in the affections of the heart of that Saviour, who shall destroy this last enemy, and give to his followers a crown of glory changeless as his own.—On him may we now both live by faith, that so when we have served our generation according to his will, we may fall asleep in his arms.

"Adieu! Your's affectionately,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

The young lady to whom he refers in this letter, appears to have been one of the seals of his early ministry, and then at the point of death. One of the letters written by him on that occasion, I am able to lay before the reader.

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No. 20.

TO MRS. ——

"DEAR MADAM,

"Both your letters were safely and joyfully received by me. I say joyfully, because they shew that God is putting honour upon my feeble and unworthy labours, and making use of them for your spiritual welfare—a circumstance that gives me more real pleasure than any other circumstance possibly could. You are much mistaken in supposing that I neglected to write to you, because you had in your letters said any thing improper; nothing could be more opposite to my ideas. Had this been the case, I should have felt it my duty to have set you right: but I can tell you what I can tell my God, when I say that I never heard or read an account of a young convert which appeared more satisfactory, or filled me with more delight, than that which you give me of yourself. I say this not to puff you up with spiritual pride, but to make you more thankful that you have obtained mercy, and to assure you that your suspicions of any dissatisfaction on my part are altogether groundless. Rather would I exclaim, '*what hath God wrought!*' and wrought too (well may I wonder) by his blessing upon my weak exertions. Oh! let the glory be ascribed to Him who gives testimony to the word of his grace. The excuse I have to plead for not writing to you before, is want of time and multiplicity of engagements —for in the academy my time is not my own.

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I have just been writing a long letter to Mrs. W.——, stating my views, wishes and hopes, for the welfare of her amiable and beloved daughter. May she be resigned to the Divine Will, and ready when the heavenly bridegroom cometh! From all that I can learn, I have no doubt of her interest in the affections of that same Jesus who is now, I trust, all *your* salvation, and all *your* desire. When I recollect that she, a seal to my ministry, is apparently going to join the heavenly musicians in singing that song which no man can learn but the redeemed, it is impossible to express my feelings. I am very desirous to hear from her own lips an account of the way in which the Lord met with her, and a statement of the sensations of her mind in prospect of the last conflict. I wished to come down to see her—I asked permission.—This could not be granted me, because I was given out last Sabbath day at the place to which I am going. But I have the happiness of informing you, that the next Lord's day I shall preach at Roydon, and so shall have an opportunity of going to Thundridge Bury Farm. I hope that our covenant God is leading you in a plain path, and teaching you more of the corruption of your own heart and the love of Christ, by his holy Spirit. All I can recommend you to do is, to be much engaged in secret prayer to him. Oh! aim to get near to him in holy communion, then you will find a heaven begun below. You will have Christ for your constant companion, and you will obtain the desire of your heart. I view this as the time of your first love. May the zealous affection for

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Christ which I hope you now discover, increase yet more and more. Live by faith upon the Son of God, who loved you, and gave himself for you. Commit your soul into his hands, and the souls of all the members of your family. It is my earnest prayer, that you may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; that so I may have to rejoice that you received the gospel when delivered by me, as in deed and in truth the word of God and not of man. As for your request about a settlement for me at Roydon, I should recommend you not to expect it. I am always happy to come amongst you as an occasional supply, but I must venture no further. I have a variety of reasons for not considering it my duty to settle with any congregation as yet, or even to think of it, and I have thus far not engaged to do so at Roydon. Therefore I must request you not merely to check, but actually to eradicate the thought. Wishing you—your respected partner—and all your family, the best of blessings, I remain

"Your's sincerely,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

Had he then been sufficiently advanced in his studies to have cherished the idea of an immediate settlement—and had he been left to the free, unbiassed expression of his feelings—there is no spot on which he would have fixed as the scene of his stated and pastoral labours, in preference to a village so tranquil and retired as Roydon. He did not value popularity, except as it afforded him an

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opportunity of doing good. No one ever was more averse to pomp or to parade. He loved simplicity in all its forms. It was indeed a characteristic feature of himself; and had not the prospect of more extensive usefulness allured him to a wider and more public sphere, his passion for retirement would have guided him in his selection of a residence for life.

Talking with him on the subject of his health, which seemed declining, beneath the pressure of so much exertion, his friend said—"Do you wish to be early laid aside—or do you desire a premature grave?" "Oh no," said he, "you know my wish—to have a meeting in the country, surrounded by trees—occasionally to see the shadows of the leaves quivering on the walls, in the reflection of the setting sun.—A burial ground near, in which I and my people can together lie!"* To live a long, honour-

* May I be indulged in another extract from the poems of Kirk White? It was a passage which Spencer often read with peculiar emphasis, and seems a melancholy comment on his own ideas.

"Beneath this yew, I would be sepulchred.
It is a lovely spot! The sultry sun,
From his meridian height, endeavours vainly
To pierce the shadowy foliage;"
"'Tis a nook
Most pleasant."

"Yet may not undistinguish'd be my grave;
But there at eve may some congenial soul
Duly resort, and shed a pious tear,
The good man's benison—no more I ask.

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able, and useful life, bringing many souls to the Saviour!—This is the summit of my wishes." Though it was denied him to enjoy the *first*, the *last* object of his desire, and by far the most important and dearest to his heart, he did possess; for never was so short a ministry honoured by the conversion of so many souls.—Every week in Liverpool discloses some fresh instances of its success—and one and another is perpetually rising up to say—'By the grace of God I am what I am,' but it was the ministry of Spencer that led me first a humble suppliant to the throne of mercy."

The situation of young ministers is peculiarly delicate and dangerous. The eyes not only of the religious public, but also of the world are fixed on them. And it is to be deplored, that where they have a right to expect the greatest kindness, they often meet with an undue severity; and those who ought to be the first to throw the mantle of love over their defects, are not unfrequently the most forward and exulting in their exposure. To an unhappy and inordinate love of scandal, many a fair and unblemished reputation has fallen the victim. The scattered wrecks by which they are surrounded, should

> And oh! (if heavenly beings may look down,
> From where, with Cherubim inspir'd, they sit,
> Upon this little dim discover'd spot,
> The earth), then will I cast a glance *below*
> On him who thus my ashes shall embalm."
>
> "Wishing he may not long be doom'd to pine
> In this low-thoughted world of darkling wo;
> But that, ere long, he reach his kindred skies."

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inspire succeeding voyagers with caution. There is a cheerfulness, compatible with the deepest seriousness—the most fervent piety; and there is a levity, in which the dignity of the minister and the sanctity of the Christian, may alike be lost. Where this is witnessed, whatever claim the individual may have upon the *generosity* and *lenity* of the spectators, he has none upon their *justice*—they have a right to censure,—and however we may deprecate their severity,—none can deny them its exercise. And here it is perhaps that students are most exposed to danger. Fatigued and wasted by the close application and intense thought of many studious weeks, they enter, as they imagine, the circle of friendship, and instantly relax. Those who only see the effect, and are unacquainted with its cause, hastily form an unfavourable opinion of their character, and cruelly propagate the opinion they have rashly formed.*

* I remember a case in point upon this subject—the mention of which may not be useless. A student from one of our academies had been spending some days with a pious and intelligent gentleman in the country, who was in the habit of having the servants of Christ beneath his hospitable roof. On his departure, the gentleman accompanied his guest some miles on his road, and in the course of conversation said—"I cannot forbear expressing to you, Sir, the satisfaction which I have enjoyed in your society. I must confess that I have been too often grieved by the levity of students, whom yet I have highly valued; but whilst *you* have displayed a cheerfulness which has enlivened our circle, you have preserved a uniform respect to your sacred office, which has secured the esteem and admiration of us all."

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These observations are not altogether inappropriate to the subject of the following letter.

No. 21.

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

Hoxton College, Oct. 27, 1809.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"The expressions of affection your last letter, all your letters, and the whole strain of your conduct towards me evince, greatly affect me, and you will find my feelings upon the subject in Prov. xxvii. 19. Sanctified friendship appears to me to be one of the best sweets in the cup of life. It is what the Saviour recommended by his own example, and what the best of men have experienced beneficial in every age. May this kind of friendship be exemplified in us, and may we mutually share in the affections of the heart of Him, who, "*having loved his own which were in the world, loved them unto the end!*" To his will in all things we must bow, and in his dispensations, however contrary to our inclination, acquiesce; but "*not my will but thine be done,*" is language which requires a large degree of grace to use in all cases, and from the bottom of our hearts.

"Many eyes are indeed upon *me*, and much do I fear that they will see something in me ere long that will take them from me. Your warnings are faithful, but my heart is still deceitful, and Satan may, for any thing I know, be about to sift me as wheat. You are not ignorant of his devices. Oh! then, pray for me, that my faith fail not, so that,

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instead of the number of those who behold me, turning away from me with disgust and aversion, they may rather glorify God in me, and take knowledge of me that I have been with Jesus. The thought that affords me some degree of encouragement, is, that Jehovah knoweth my path, and that *he is able to make me stand*, yea to remove the suspicions of those who '*fear and wait to see.*' But really I cannot help thinking that there are some people in the world who seem as if they wished for something to hinder one's usefulness; and who by their too significant expressions on the subject, lead me to suppose that they would rejoice in such a circumstance, and say, 'Oh! so would we have it.' And why? Because then their clever prophecies would be fulfilled, and we should for the future put such confidence in their forebodings as to view them as certain omens of ill events. I do hope, however, that God will in great mercy either keep me from the snares that lie in my way, or take me to himself.

"I have to day written to the Kidderminster people, referring them to the Doctor, or Mr. Wilson. I will try and be with you to-morrow by 12 o'clock. Do not be disappointed if I should not be able.

"I remain your's affectionately,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

On Sunday the 5th of November he was appointed to preach at Cambridge, in the pulpit lately occupied by the Rev. Robert Hall, A. M. a name dear to genius, as to religion. The day following he spent in viewing the University. In a letter dated the 3d,

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he says, "last night my surprise was excited by seeing that I am not appointed on the list for any place in town, but for *Cambridge*. I am to stay Monday over at Cambridge, to look at the colleges, &c. I shall think much of Kirke White;" and aware of the respectability, both in wealth and talent, of the congregation he was called to address, he adds, "the Lord make me prudent and faithful; may it appear that he has some good end to answer by conducting me thither."

He was exceedingly attached to the poetry of Henry Kirke White. He could repeat a great part of it, and frequently quoted it with great emphasis and feeling. "And yet," said he, in conversation with the friend to whom these letters are addressed, "there is a thirst for fame sometimes discovered which pains me.

"Fifty years hence, and who will hear of Henry."

"Well, suppose *nobody* does, and what then? If Henry has served his day and generation, and is gone to glory, neither the church nor he will be losers; and the hearing of Henry will be too small a consideration to be brought into the account."

Public as Spencer's life had now become, and exposed as he was to the influence of every unholy passion which popularity might awaken, he yet maintained a close and humble walk with God. He courted solitude, and for the best of purposes. Of him it may be truly said, '*his fellowship was with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*' The holy and the heavenly tone his mind received in those retired hours, gave a peculiar unction to his

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ministry; and the knowledge which, by deep communion with his own heart and constant intercourse with God, he had obtained, rendered his preaching remarkably profitable to believers, and gave him a skill in administering instructions adapted to all the varieties of their experience. Of this, the following is a pleasing specimen.

No. 22.

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

November 9, 1809.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"Be assured that I, as well as yourself, have walked in darkness, and complained that there was no light. Fluctuations in experience are, I am sure, my lot, whilst my only consolation in such circumstances still remain—'tis the unchangeableness of Christ. Oh! what is so calculated to reconcile our minds to the way our Father calls us to travel, as the recollection, that whilst we are found in it, Jesus is the same, and that to the end of the journey; and in every trying circumstance he is a present help. In darkness he will enable us to trust in the Lord, and to stay ourselves upon our God; yea, he will cheer our desponding souls with visitation sweet. Seasons in which we experience darkness of mind, and depression of soul, are necessary: they form the analogy between us and those who through *tribulation* are gone to heaven: they render us fit subjects for the illuminating and refreshing grace of Christ: they add a higher relish to the re-

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newed enjoyment of the light and liberty of the gospel; and they serve to prepare us for that world where the Lord shall be our everlasting life, and our God our glory.

"Reflecting upon deliverance from such times of depression should teach us to say—'*Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee!*' It should lead us to anticipate future favours, and rejoice that He that hath delivered us can and will deliver; and since the day has dawned, and the shadows have fled away, we should most cordially adore Him who has been appointed to give light to them who sit in darkness, and to guide our feet into the way of peace. May you and I ever enjoy the presence of Jesus, our best friend; share in his tender sympathy; his kind reproofs; his excellent counsels. May he be our God forever and ever, and our guide even unto death. Then we need fear no evil. If sensible that he is with us, we may pass through midnight glooms, and experience a season of great darkness, and yet look forward to a future time, when with pleasure we shall sing, '*The Lord is my light, of whom shall I be afraid.*' Oh! that I may be enabled to commit your soul and my own into the hands of Jesus as unto a faithful Creator. I can now add no more, than to say that

"I remain affectionately your's,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

The next letter furnishes another proof of his humility and diffidence. It was written the day before it became his turn to preach again in the

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chapel at Hoxton the Thursday evening lecture, which the tutors usually attend.

No. 23.

TO MR. HADDON.

December 6, 1809.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I am sensible that Mr. S.'s politeness '*merits*' much of us, and if I must name some day for us to meet there it must be Monday next. This we will speak of to-morrow evening. I am sorry you have been so busy about so worthless an object as myself. I need not say, pray especially for me, that a divine blessing may attend me to-morrow evening in preaching before those whom you know I too much dread as hearers.—'The Lord grant unto his servant, that with all boldness he may speak his word.' I trust your desire and expectation of obtaining good on Friday evening will be gratified. My mind is rather more composed than it has ever been before, when I have had to preach here on the Thursday evening. How it will be when the time comes, I know not. Many eyes are upon me, and different, very different are the feelings with which my brethren hear *me*. But if the Head of the Church gives each of them a blessing, they will I hope be satisfied.

"Your's affectionately,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

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It is indeed much to be regretted, that any feelings but those of mutual affection, forbearance, and candour, should be cherished in the hearts of brethren—and such surely are the students in the same academy. But in the present imperfect state of our nature, it must be expected, that superior excellence, while it is the object of universal admiration abroad, will, in too many instances, be exposed to the malignant glance of envy and of jealousy at home. And when the scourge of criticism is supplied with knots by these, who but must expect to smart beneath its strokes. It is certainly to the honour of the institution to which Mr. Spencer belonged, that its members for the most part knew, admired, and confessed his worth;—and if there were any exceptions—let them remain in that oblivion in which is their best security.* But the solemn admonition of his early death, should tend to check the bitter exercise of that unhallowed sarcasm by which the rise of extraordinary usefulness or genius is too frequently assailed. In academies of religion and literature, where the avowed object of every student is, not his individual advancement, but the glory

* "Those who admire and cherish rising talent, can have no bitter reflections when they contemplate the grave of SPENCER. They hailed his entrance into public life, and strengthened his hands by their prayers and their approbation. Those who could envy him, and such I know there were, must be covered with merited shame, when they behold him so early stript of those honours, talents, advantages, and successes, which exposed him to their jealousy and malignity. If these unworthy men were before me, I would 'speak daggers to them, but use none!'"—*See Styles' Funeral Sermon for the Rev. T. Spencer, page 28.*

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of God, a spirit of detraction and envy ought to be unknown. The most devoted and useful, should be most esteemed. Every private interest should be lost in the general welfare of the church of Christ. One may behold, indeed, with less concern, the strokes of satire when they fall upon the arrogant, the presumptuous, and the vain;—but when talents are attended by humility—when popularity is connected with diffidence—and eminent piety is mingled with extraordinary displays of genius,—to such an object the severity of sarcasm is improperly directed, and every well-regulated mind must view its exercise with pain.

About this time his health again declined. A severe cold for some days deprived him of his voice—and he was compelled to rest one Sabbath day from his public work. What were his feelings in prospect of that Sabbath, this letter will declare.

No. 24.

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

December 6, 1809.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"It appears that your suspicions that I should preach three times to-morrow, will not, cannot be realized, for Mr. Western, as well as those around me are agreed, that I must not go to Hertford at all, judging it dangerous for me to go out, much more so to preach. Yesterday I passed a miserable day. The thought of the pain of mind the letter I sent home would occasion to my friends,

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hurt me much, and I was much worse than I had been before, as my lungs and throat felt more inflamed. To-day I think I am better, but still very far from well. I can scarcely bear the prospect of a silent Sabbath. I think I shall be quite out of my element to-morrow. Oh! that I did but more firmly believe, that he who is my Saviour does all things well, and that he who sustains the the dread character of Judge of all the earth must do right. If I am able, I shall hear Mr. Hordle in the morning. I have no voice yet. I hope it is not irretrievably lost. I need not say, that if you can call this evening it will give me unspeakable pleasure.

"Your's affectionately,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

Reflecting on this temporary indisposition in a letter to his father, he says,—"I have reason to hope that the measure of affliction with which our heavenly Father thought fit to visit me, has been made a blessing to my soul. It gave me time for reflection and close self examination. It gave a new zest to my feelings, and when it was removed, I hope I was inspired with fresh ardour to live for the glory of God."

Amid the constant bustle of a public life, the retirement which temporary indisposition affords, must be most beneficial to a pious mind. Then it can relax into a calm and intimate communion with itself. It can quietly indulge in such a review of the past—and such an anticipation of the future, as will tend not a little, under the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit,

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to curb its impetuosity—correct its levity—and regulate its principles. From the chamber of sickness, the exercises of the pulpit will be furnished with materials of the highest order; and the beds of the diseased will be attended with a sympathy, which experience of similar affliction only can excite.

The greater part of the Christmas vacation Mr. Spencer spent at Brighton, and on the first day of the year 1810, he preached at the Rev. Mr. Styles' chapel, to young people, from 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27, 28. '*Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardst his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes and weep before me: I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace. Neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same.*'

The good seed which he was the instrument of scattering in Brighton, very rapidly sprang up. In a letter to his father, written immediately on his return from thence, and dated Jan. 12th, 1810, he says, "a young person who heard me at Mr. Styles' last year, was called by divine grace under my instrumentality, and died before I went this time, bearing an honourable testimony to the religion of Jesus, and to her interest in it. Oh! what hath God wrought!"

During his stay at Brighton, he had occasion to solicit a favour of his friend in London, the performance of which was acknowledged in the following letter.

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No. 25.

TO MR. HADDON.

Brighton, January 1, 1810.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"However you may smile at the idea of my writing you a 'letter of thanks,' I assure you I think you have a claim upon it, for you have done for me what I should have liked few others to have done; but suffice it to say, it came safe to hand. Last Thursday evening I preached on Luke xxiv. 32. Yesterday morning at the Countess', on Eph. ii. 14. In the evening at Mr. Styles', it being the close of the year, on Exodus xxiii. 20. To-night I shall *only* preach, as one minister will commence, and another close with prayer. It is said that I shall preach at the chapel on Thursday evening. You ask me, where I shall be next Sabbath. Many advise me to remain at Brighton; but it is my present intention to return home on the Friday, though I really feel myself in a difficulty about it. I hope I have, since I have been at this place, enjoyed the divine blessing —those with whom I associate are the excellent of the earth—with no others have I any occasion to be at all connected. In this respect I am like your good friend Mr. H. of Westminster. We certainly do not in general sufficiently estimate the worth of the society of those who discover the mind that was in Christ;—great is the benefit we may derive from their company. Oh! let those of us who fear the Lord speak often with one another; one may thus come at each other's follies, and stimulate each other to the

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performance of that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. I think my cold is getting better. After I had preached last night, a valuable young Scotch clergyman, who was there, wished I might live to preach many such sermons—What could I say, but '*all the days of my appointed time will I wait 'till my change come.*' It is a great satisfaction to know, that we are training up for heaven, and 'ripening apace for the vision of God.' Pray for me, that this perseverance may be given me. You know my object is the glory of God in the good of souls,—that this may be accomplished, by my exertions, is my prayer, my hope, my aim. Whether living or dying, may we be the Lord's. I have, however, at present no other idea, than that I shall be spared yet, and *not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord.** Wishing you the enjoyment of the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush, and assuring you of my steady attachment,

"I remain your's affectionately,
"THOMAS SPENCER."

On Wednesday, the 28th of February, being a day appointed for a general fast, Mr. Spencer preached a sermon at Hoxton chapel, adapted to the occasion; his text was Ezek. lx. 4, '*Go through the midst of*

* Alas! how blind are we to futurity! A clergyman not long since, while uttering these very words in the pulpit, suddenly turned pale—his voice faultered—he fell back and expired! Little did the amiable Spencer think, that the hand which thus conveyed to his friend the pleasing anticipation of a long and useful life, should lie so soon in the impotence of death!

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the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof.' The general scope and style of this sermon may be ascertained by the following extract from the communication of his friend:—

"A minister said to me, 'I don't know how a good fast sermon can be preached, without touching upon politicks.'—'If you will hear Spencer to-morrow, I think you will find that it can be done.' When we met again, he told me that he had heard an excellent fast sermon, without a word upon politicks. I remember, that in that sermon he said, 'when your ear is pained with oaths and imprecations as you pass the street, remember that that swearer is your fellow countryman, calling for vengeance upon *your* country, and do you, by ejaculatory prayer, strive to avert it.'

To enter into a minute detail of the places at which Mr. Spencer preached between this period and the ensuing vacation, would be useless. Suffice it to say, that his labours were unremitting—that he visited several congregations in the country—particularly those at *Hertford*, *Reading*, *Henley*, and *Brighton*.

He was appointed one of the three students who should deliver the public orations at the coming anniversary—held at midsummer. This preyed with considerable anxiety upon his mind, and although one should have imagined that by this time he had become familiar with large auditories and critical hearers—yet we find him shrinking from the task, and expressing many fears respecting it. The sub-

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ject allotted to him was, "THE INFLUENCE OF THE GOSPEL ON THE SPIRIT AND TEMPER." His colleagues in that trying service was, Messrs. John Burder and Stenner; and to these gentlemen were given as topics of discussion, "THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT," and "THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT." The day before that on which the discourses were to be delivered, he expressed his feelings thus:—

No. 26.

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

Hoxton, June 19, 1810.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"Consonant with your request, I here transmit to you the notes of the sermon on Eutychus: if you can, let me have them again before I go into Lancashire. You mention *to-morrow*, and oh! what anxiety do I feel in the prospect of it; already it has cost me some tears, it may cost me many more. Would to God that I may experience the assisting grace of Him who has before proved himself able to do for me exceeding abundantly above all that I could ask or think. "If the light of his countenance shine upon me, then I shall shine in the sight of heaven, and in the eyes of his saints, who know and can recognise the reflections of the Saviour's glory. From what I can anticipate of the congregation, it will be terrific; but does not the promise, '*I am with you always*,' extend to particular occasions? Most certainly it does; then it takes in this

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trying service. May I have faith and trust in it, and be favoured with an experimental confirmation of its truth. Believing that you do sincerely and constantly commend me to the kind care of your Father and my Father, of your God and my God, I remain

"Affectionately your's,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

We now arrive at the period of Mr. Spencer's first visit to Liverpool. Before we pass on with him to that new and interesting scene, it may be well to pause, and take such a general view of his mode of thinking and acting, while a student, as the following characteristic sketches from the hand of his most intimate friend, will furnish. I shall present them in a miscellaneous way just as they occur. Thus the reader will converse with him,—hear his own sentiments, expressed in his own language, and imperceptibly become familiar with the man.

"'That passage,' said he, 'is much upon my mind —'Let no man despise thy youth.' I understand the apostle thus:—Let your walk and conduct be such, that no man *can* despise thy youth. And such shall be my own."

"He was favoured with peculiar facility in composition. 'Many a sermon,' said he, 'have I composed between Hoxton and your house.' His ideas flowed faster than he could write them, and when alone our conversation has met with frequent interruption from his stopping to commit to paper, before

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they escaped him, the ideas crossing his mind. Turning to me privately, as I sat by his side one evening at the tea-table of a friend, 'Look at that,' said he, 'will it do?' It was the sketch of a sermon, which he had composed during the conversation. 'I don't know,' said he, (and those who suppose my friend was boasting, did not know him) 'I don't know,' said he, 'that for a long time I have had time enough for any one sermon; I was crampt in every head for want of time.' His sermons at that time were 65 minutes to 75 in preaching; though his hearers were not aware of it."

"In composing, he used to fold a sheet of foolscap paper in eight leaves, leaving the last side for the heads of application. However long the sermon might be, he never wrote more of it; and in preaching, varied the sermon every time he preached it. 'How do you obtain your texts?' 'I keep a little book in which I enter every text of scripture which comes into my mind with power and sweetness. Were I to dream of a passage of scripture, I should enter it; and when I sit down to compose, I look over the book, and have never found myself at a loss for a subject."

"His memory was remarkably tenacious; he could regularly repeat every service in which he had ever engaged, with the chapter which he had read, and those of his acquaintance who were present. Returning from Holloway, after preaching, said he, 'Did you perceive any thing particular in me this morning?' 'No.' 'I was very ill in the

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pulpit; my memory totally forsook me; I could not recollect my subject, but having my notes in my pocket, I took them out and read them.' 'I am glad of it; I give you joy; you can no longer condemn assistance to an imperfect memory.' 'O no, I boast no more; from henceforth, I am silent upon that subject."

"The young man that has just passed my study door,' said he, 'is fearful that he shall not keep up *variety* in his sermons. The best way that I find to attain variety is continually to ask myself 'What is there in the circumstances before me, that will benefit my sermon on Sabbath morning?' for a minister should turn every thing into gold. And by keeping my eye continually upon that point, I am seldom at a loss for variety."

"Few persons have held pulpit eloquence in higher estimation than Spencer did, or in more contempt when it stood in competition with the interest of souls. I remember asking his opinion of an eloquent sermon which he had been hearing—'Why,' said he, 'I could have wept over it—I could have wept to hear immortals so treated."

"Your morning sermon yesterday was approved, but not that in the afternoon.' 'No, I suppose not, and I will give you the reason. In the morning, when I preached on privileges, they were pleased; but when, in the afternoon, I came to duties, they remembered their treatment of their late venerable pastor. I particularly respect aged ministers, and

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love to assist them, and generally add a trifle to the collection, when I have been preaching in behalf of a church which has an aged minister."

"He was much tried by the envy of some little minds. 'Mr. S.' said —— to him, 'You was very late, I hear, at Walworth.' 'Yes, Sir, and there you may see your own error; you know *you* say I am too eager for the pulpit, now you see your mistake.' At another time, 'Spencer,' said a person whose name shall be secret, 'Popularity is a dangerous thing.' 'It is.' 'No one is popular long.' 'Very true.' 'You are popular *now*, but you will not be so long.' 'That I certainly shall not, Sir, if *your wishes* are accomplished; but I fully believe, that my popularity hurts you more than it does me.' The bell soon after summoned him to read (in his turn) a sermon for general criticism. The first person called upon said, that its *merits* were such, that he had nothing to say of its *defects*. That sentiment was universal. 'And,' said he to me afterwards, 'when I considered what had passed, I felt that that was a moment of gratification."

"A lady, who had misunderstood an idea in his sermon, wrote me a hasty letter, charging him with antinomianism, and me with gross impropriety in hearing him. It was Saturday night, and he was to preach in the same pulpit the next day. I went to inform him of the circumstance, that he might take an unperceived opportunity of explaining himself. He held out his hand to give his usual affectionate squeeze, when I drew back. 'I don't know

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how to shake hands with an antinomian.' 'An antinomian! What is the matter?' 'Read this proof of it.' He read it; his pleasantry subsided; and with a countenance which spoke the feeling of his noble soul, 'O,' said he, 'this letter does me good. —The attention of that congregation would have led me to suppose that they were pleased, and perhaps profited by what they heard; and yet you see, that there were those present who not only misunderstood me, but supposed that I was a preacher of antinomianism. This letter does me good; for sometimes Satan claps me on the back, here in my study, and says, 'That sermon will do very well, and especially from one so young as you'—and then I begin to mount, and fancy that I *am* somebody; but such a letter as this clips my wings—and then,' said he, (with undescribable expression) 'I drop into my place,—the dust. Do bring me all the intelligence of this kind that you can."

"How I wish they would begin the service with Watts' 152d hymn, 2d book.* That hymn always

* SINAI AND SION.—Heb. xii. 18, &c.

"NOT to the terrors of the Lord,
The tempest, fire and smoke;
Not to the thunder of that word,
Which God on Sinai spoke;

But we are come to Sion's hill,
The city of our God,
Where milder words declare his will,
And spread his love abroad.

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sooths my mind in the opening of worship. My whole soul enters into it, especially the last two verses.' 'Why do you not request that it may be given out?' 'Because it does not become one of my age to dictate.' ''Tis no dictation, but a gratification of your friends; it secures congeniality through the service when you mention the hymns you wish.' 'And can we have it to *Staughton?*' 'No, to *Prospect.*' 'No, no, *Staughton;* that is my tune for a common metre, and *Shirland* for short metre.' The 5th verse *he* frequently quoted."

"One day, mentioning to him an interesting text of Mr. Cecil's, preached on the last night of the year, said he, 'That will just do for me to preach at Brighton, to conclude the services of the present year. But don't shew me Mr. Cecil's 'till I have composed mine. I would not borrow a single idea.'"

Behold th' innumerable host
Of angels, cloth'd in light!
Behold the spirits of the just,
Whose faith is turn'd to sight!

Behold the bless'd assembly there,
Whose names are writ in heav'n;
And God, the judge of all, declares
Their vilest sins forgiv'n.

The saints on earth, and all the dead,
But one communion make;
All join in Christ, their living head,
And of his grace partake.

In such society as this
My weary soul would rest:
The man that dwells where Jesus is,
Must be forever blest."

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"Preaching one morning at Hoxton, after he had prayed as usual at his entrance into the pulpit, I missed him; he bent forward for a considerable time so low, that I could scarcely perceive him from the gallery. When I afterwards asked him if any thing ailed him, said he, 'When I went into the pulpit, and saw that crowded audience, recollecting that they were all looking to me for instruction, and remembering my own youth and inexperience, I was overwhelmed, and leaning forward, implored more earnestly the divine assistance."

"While preaching at Jewin-street, he one afternoon took the two lower steps at once, in ascending the pulpit stairs.—When we afterwards met, I asked, 'Did you notice the manner of your going into the pulpit?' 'I did, and thought that you would also—it was inadvertent; but it was wrong. It did not become the solemnity of the place.—I never remember such a circumstance before, and will be more guarded in future.' As a proof of the *necessity* of his watchfulness over the minutiæ of his actions, I mention that an aged Christian said to me some time afterwards, 'I loved Spencer's sermons, but there was a lightness about him.' —'A lightness! when, and where did he discover it?' 'At our meeting, in jumping up the pulpit stairs.' 'Did you see it more than once?' 'No.' 'Then I can tell you, that that once he felt and lamented it as deeply as you could; and I am sure that he never repeated it. Is not that satisfactory?' 'It is."

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"Spencer followed Cecil; he united deep humility with true ministerial dignity: nor do I conceive it possible for a youth to be less affected by popularity than he was; and as to flattery, if his flatterers had known the light in which he viewed them, they would have been silent. Coming from a vestry, where adulation had been offered—'Don't fear for me,' said he, 'on account of what has passed; it was too weak to hurt: my danger is when those, on whose judgment I depend, speak unguardedly!' At another time, after a young man had been very lavish in his praises, (who had several times been guilty of the same impropriety) I told him I thought the next time he addressed himself to me, I should give him a hint of it. 'O no,' said he, 'treat it with the same contempt that I do. To mention it, would give too much importance to his judgment. I would not have him think that *his* judgment could *do any harm*."

"Spencer was particularly happy in his choice of texts for particular occasions; 'I feel great difficulty,' said he, 'in preaching at Hertford, where I have to address many who walked with God before I was born. To-morrow will be the first Sabbath that I have regularly supplied there. I have chosen for my subject, Romans xvi. 7.' In which he shewed what it was to be in Christ; and the duties which aged Christians owe to younger ones—faithful reproof and exhortation—prayer for them, &c. For his sermon on regeneration, he chose James i. 18, which, as he said, comprised the *whole* subject;—the efficient *cause*—'The will of God;' the grand

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means used—'the word of truth;' the great end in view—that believers should be—'First fruits of His creatures.' A gentleman, who possesses a fine mind, said to me, 'I had heard so much of Spencer, that when I went to hear him, I expected to be disappointed; but I found the reverse to be the case. When he gave out his text it was with an emphasis which so forcibly laid open the apostle's argument, that my attention was rivetted, and I was perfectly astonished."

"He loved to improve the festivals of the church, such as Christmas and Easter, 'because,' said he, 'people expect then to hear upon the subject, and I think we ought to meet every appearance of preparation of mind with suitable instruction. The passage of scripture which led my mind to the ministry, and which satisfies me as to the propriety of my engaging in it, is that promise of God to the Gentile church, Isaiah lxix. 21.—Oh! that text is very precious to me; while the death of Miss —— at Brighton, and Miss —— at ——, tends to convince me that I am right.' Those ladies died in the Lord, and were called under Spencer's ministry."

"I used,' said he, 'to feel very much in preaching before certain characters. My difficulty is now removed by considering, that, let them be as learned or as pious as they may, it is probable that they have not turned their attention to the individual point before me so closely as I have, and therefore it is likely that my sermon may afford some in-

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struction even to them, and this thought gives me courage."

"Mr. Spencer's simplicity in dress was well known. He avoided in that respect the very appearance of evil, that his ministry might not be blamed. One Sabbath morning, when he called for me, he had a new coat on, which I told him I thought was more fashionable than he would approve. 'I did not know it,' said he, and on the next Sabbath morning, he asked me if I thought it more becoming *then:* he had had it altered."

"I was desired by several medical gentlemen to inform him, that unless he slackened his exertions, he could not live to see five and twenty. When I mentioned it, he said, 'that it certainly must be attended to, for that his hope was to live a long and useful life.' He therefore determined to alter the length of his sermons from an hour or sixty-five minutes to forty-five."

"I am going,' said he, 'to preach at Vauxhall to-morrow, where you may come with a very safe conscience. You need not be afraid of a large congregation *there.* You do not like large congregations for me; but don't you remember how much more encouragement and satisfaction the man has who fishes in a pond which is full of fish, than he who fishes in a place where he knows there are but two or three."

"Before S. left the academy, a gentleman, whose judgment, or piety, few are disposed to dispute, said

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to me, 'If it were not for the sound of his voice, with my eyes shut, I could suppose him a man of seventy. He is ripening fast for heaven—I can fancy him an angel, come down into the pulpit, soon to return."

"Another gentleman, possessed of undeniable critical skill, and difficult to please, after he had heard him, said, 'I stood the whole service—and I could have stood till midnight. I felt as under the influence of a charm I could not resist, and was rivetted to the spot, intent only upon the fascinating object I saw before me."

"It was with sincere pity that he saw any young minister descend from the holy dignity of his station, by attention, as soon as the service was concluded, to the advances of females, who, had they really received the benefit they professed, would have shewn it in a very different way."*

.....

Mr. Spencer was appointed by the committee to spend the midsummer vacation in this year at Newington chapel, Liverpool, then destitute of a pastor, by the death of the Rev. David Bruce. The report of his extraordinary talents and amazing popularity

* This is to Spencer's honour. Those who are accustomed to attend the vestries in London, after the sermons of popular preachers, will enter into the meaning of this observation. It would be well, if some whom it may concern would also take the hint it affords.

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had already, from various quarters, reached that place. And the congregation amongst whom he was, for a few weeks to labour, had some pleasing expectations, that they might find in him a future pastor, every way qualified for the important sphere of usefulness, which so large and populous a town presented. But on the mind of Mr. Spencer far other impressions had been unhappily produced. From whatever sources he had drawn his information of the state of religion and manners in this place, it was certainly most incorrect—and such as led him to anticipate his visit with feelings of considerable uneasiness and reluctance. Nor did he seem at all anxious to conceal the fact, that his coming was the consequence of a necessity, to which he was compelled to bow. So deep was his prejudice against Liverpool, that it seems to have caused the only exception to that uniform submission with which he yielded to the arrangements made by his constituents for his labours. But on this occasion, he did not hesitate frankly to assure a gentleman, who meeting him in London, expressed a hope, that they should soon have the pleasure of seeing him in Liverpool, that "it was not *his* wish to see Liverpool—and that although the committee had appointed him to go, he should do all in his power to prevail upon them to send some other student."

But a visit upon which so much depended, and whence such amazing consequences were to flow, could not be abandoned by a superintending Providence, to the obstacles of his prejudices, or the influence of his feelings. His destination was fixed—It was the voice of duty, and he obeyed. He ar-

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rived in Liverpool on Saturday, the 30th of June, 1810, and commenced his public labours on the following Sabbath.

Mr. Spencer selected for the subject of his first discourse, Luke xxiv. 32, "*And they said one to another, did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures.*"* In the afternoon he preached from Heb. xii. 24, "*And to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.*" And in the evening from 1 Cor. xv. 25, "*For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.*"

The impression produced by the labours of this Sabbath will be long remembered. The emotion then awakened has not subsided to this day. Every sermon that he preached tended to deepen the conviction of his piety and talents—and to endear him to the people. His lively, affectionate manner, and the simple but elegant style of his discourses, captivated all who heard him. Every sermon produced accessions to the congregation of such as, drawn by the report of his extraordinary powers, pressed to witness their display. The chapel soon became crowded to excess—and not alone the thoughtless and the gay, whom the charms of a persuasive eloquence and an engaging manner might attract, but pious and experienced Christians sat at his feet with deep attention and delight. There seemed to be indeed *a shaking amongst the dry bones.* A divine unction evidently attended his ministry, and such were the effects produced, that every beholder, with

* See Appendix, No. III.

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astonishment and admiration, cried 'what hath God wrought!'

In his own views of Liverpool, too, a great change was wrought by the remarkable circumstances attendant on his ministry. The kind assiduities of the family under whose hospitable roof he resided, and an intercourse with the pious part of the congregation, which they carefully promoted, tended gradually to weaken his prejudices, and at length completely to turn the bias, and reverse the purpose of his mind. The period of his stay was limited to five Sabbaths; but at the earnest solicitation of the people, he consented, after communicating with his friends in London, to add another to the number. And in the afternoon of the last Sabbath, he preached from Deut. xxxiii. 3, '*Yea, he loved the people*,' in such a style of endearment and affection, as seemed to warrant the indulgence of their warmest hopes. The last week of his visit was spent in the most delightful intercourse with Christian friends; and on Tuesday, the 7th of August, he left Liverpool with reluctance and tears.

The following extracts are from his correspondence while at Liverpool.

No. 27.

TO MR. HADDON.

Liverpool, July 3d, 1810.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

* * * * *

"I had a most uncomfortable journey. The distance was so great, the company so disagreeable,

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and I so low spirited, that I can truly say, I never travelled in such misery before. When I arrived at Manchester, there was no one to meet me at the coach. No one expected me. After a great deal of trouble I found out Mr. Smith's house, and I shall always feel indebted to him for the kindness with which he received me, though unexpected, and for the hospitality with which he entertained me till Saturday morning, when I left Manchester for *Liverpool*. And say you, what are your sentiments about *that?*—I freely tell you then, that I think it is an excellent town, &c. &c.; but I had rather any one should be here supplying than myself, and I long for the time when I shall leave for Hoxton.

* * * * *

"Depend upon it, if possible, I will set off for London on Monday, July 30th; I wish it were to-morrow—but perhaps I do wrong in complaining. May you enjoy the presence of Him who has shut me up from the society of my beloved companions for a time, perhaps that I might seek more earnestly after his own.

"I remain,

"Your's affectionately,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

No. 28.

TO MR. HADDON.

Liverpool, July 17, 1810.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I suppose you have been looking for a letter for a day or two past from your friend at Liv-

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erpool, so here it is come at last. I did not preach at Manchester, for notice had been given the Sabbath before, that there would be no preaching there the next Wednesday evening—nor have I been to ——. I saw no one from his house when I was at Manchester, nor have I heard any thing from him since: most likely I shall not see him at all. In fact I have quite visiting enough among the people of the congregation.

* * * * *

"Here are some excellent people, very pious, and zealous for the honour of God, and the good of immortal souls, in this town. With some of them I shall be almost sorry to part.

"Last Sunday evening I preached the sermon for Hoxton; we collected about 40*l*. The place I preach in is called *Newington Chapel*. I forget the name of the street it stands in. There are many more dissenting places of worship here than you seem aware of. I am not yet certain whether I stay six Sabbaths.

"Mr. —— has written me a long and pressing letter for me to go to Plymouth Dock, which he says is just the thing for me—he wishes me to settle there—gives an exceedingly high character of the place. According to his request I must write to him soon, but I scarce know in what manner. It is a large congregation, and he says, that there is there 'a huge army of the soldiers of the cross.'

"I will take care to get you a plan of the town. I hear that a fire has consumed Huntingdon's chapel in Tichfield-street—is it true? Dr. W. has written to me, requesting me to supply New Court the first Sabbath in August.

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"The Wednesday after I wrote to you, I preached on Psalm lxi. 2. Following Sabbath—morning, Colos. iii. 3: afternoon, John x. 9: evening, Job xxxvi. 18. The next Wednesday evening, Gal. iv. 7. Last Sabbath morning, Zech. vi. 13: afternoon, the same concluded: evening, Zech. iii. 7. Monday evening, at the prayer meetings, I either go over the outline of one of the sermons preached the day before, or else give a short exhortation, as at Hoxton.

"I suppose you know that I have written to D. C—— but not to Mr. B——. For the fact is, I had rather not. I do not know how, and I do not see that it would do any good, so must decline it. I am out almost every day. Oh why should people be afraid to let me be alone; why will they not let me enjoy my much-loved solitude! On several accounts I feel anxious to get home; and can now indeed say, 'Hoxton, with all thy faults, I love thee still.'

"Present my respects to all our *friends* in town. Give me as much intelligence as you can in your next, and believe me still

"Your sincere friend,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

Very soon after his return to Hoxton, Mr. Spencer received from the church and congregation at Newington chapel, an unanimous and pressing invitation to accept the pastoral office over them. The call was dated on the 8th of August, 1810. After near seven weeks deliberation, Mr. Spencer returned an answer in the affirmative. In what exercises of mind these seven weeks were spent, those who knew the peculiar circumstances of his situation can well

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conceive. On the one hand,—the unanimous request of a people to whom God had directed him contrary to his wish, and to whom he had become singularly endeared:—the imperious call of duty to a sphere of action for which his talents seemed every way adapted, in which his labours had been already remarkably successful, and which promised most extensive usefulness. These were circumstances of no common magnitude. But on the other hand, there were many powerful ties to bind him to the neighbourhood of the metropolis. His family—his best friendships—his most endeared connexions—the scenes of his early and honourable labours—all conspired in the prospect of his removal to so great a distance, to awaken the most painful and distressing feelings in his mind.—And resolutely to resist the importunities of friends, the value of whose society we fully know—to rise superior to those local attachments which long and happy intercourse cannot fail to form—and to leave the circle to which time and frequent interchange of sentiment have rendered us familiar and endeared, for a land of strangers—involve a sacrifice which only the voice of duty can demand, or the hope of usefulness repay. Yet such are the sacrifices which the Christian minister must frequently be called to make; and whilst on his part they are with cheerfulness surrendered to the call of duty, and the cause of Christ, let those in whose particular behalf they are claimed, seek by every affectionate office of friendship, to blunt the edge of separation, and relieve as much as may be by kindness, the memory of distant friendships and endeared connexions.

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I insert a copy of Mr. Spencer's answer to the call which he received from the church and congregation at Newington; as it will afford to the reader an additional opportunity of obtaining an acquaintance with its amiable author.

No. 29.

To the Independent Church of Christ, assembling in Newington Chapel, Liverpool.

"MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

"Being unwilling to keep you any longer in suspense than is absolutely necessary, upon the important subject of my settlement with a church and congregation, I feel it my duty to reply to your obliging and respectful invitation. You are well aware, that I came amongst you influenced by the strongest prejudices against the place, and resolutely determined never to think of it as a sphere calculated for me. Whilst I was amongst you, however, several circumstances united to remove the strength of my prejudices, and I trust to make me determined by every appointed and lawful means to ascertain the will of God, and when ascertained, cheerfully to fulfil it, however opposed it might be to my private wishes and inclinations. A review of the partial degree of success with which my labours in Liverpool were honoured, does afford me considerable pleasure, and I must say, that I speak the real sentiments of my heart when I confess, that the manner in which you, my respected friends and brethren in the gospel, have conducted this important

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affair, has raised you exceedingly in my esteem, and given me to believe, that a preacher would find among you as a people, those motives to diligence and those sources of real happiness in the prosecution of his work, which, alas! are denied to many a faithful minister of the New Testament.

"When I regard you as a church and congregation, I feel anxiously concerned for your spiritual and eternal welfare, and indeed earnestly desire, if consistent with the good pleasure of His will, the great Head of the Church would make use of *me* to build you up in faith and holiness; but my motives for thinking favourably of your invitation arise also from other sources. I look at the state of thousands of inhabitants in that vast town, to many of whom I hope to be the instrument of conveying the 'joyful sound;' my soul longs that they may receive the salvation which is in Jesus Christ, with eternal glory, and influenced I have reason to believe by the direction of my God, I resolve to preach among them the unsearchable riches of Christ.

"I assure you, my fellow travellers to Zion, I can observe, with admiration, peculiarities in this dispensation which never before struck me in reference to any other situation. Oh may it appear, that this work and this counsel is of God!

"*Some* difficulties must be met, and some sacrifices must be made, *by me*, when I leave the scenes of my former exertions in the cause of Christ, for the sake of the people at Newington. But these are things which I must ever expect; these are

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circumstances which I resolved should never move me, when I first gave myself to God and His Christ!

"Truly believing then that I am acting under the direction of an all wise Jehovah, and humbly asking that this may be made manifest in after days, *I accept the invitation* you have given me to exercise over you the pastoral office.—I comply with your unanimous request, and shall from this day consider myself as solemnly bound to you, if you see it right to allow me the following requisitions:—

"That I preach among you regularly but *twice on the Sabbath*, viz. morning and evening. I mention this, because I know that my constitution will not admit of three services in the day, and I am sure it is not consistent with your wishes, that I should prevent myself from future exertions by presuming on too much at first; and the plan I propose will I am persuaded after trial prove beneficial rather than injurious to the cause at Newington. To preaching to you twice on the Sabbath and once in the week, I shall never feel the least objection. My other wish is—

"That I may have in the spring of the year six weeks annually to myself, to visit my friends, and occasionally see other parts of the Lord's vineyard.

"I do not leave Hoxton academy till after Christmas, and perhaps may not be with you so early as you wish.—It is my intention, however, to commence my labours among you, if convenient to yourselves, on the first Sabbath in February, 1811.

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Your sentiments on the subjects I have mentioned, you will be pleased to communicate to me as early as possible.

"And now just allow me, my respected friends, to request you not to form too sanguine expectations in reference to the pleasure you expect to enjoy when I become your pastor. You will doubtless find in me much to pity and to blame; yet it is my earnest prayer that you may never have to charge me with neglect in watching over you in the Lord; finally, I request your supplications for me at the throne of the heavenly Majesty, that a door of utterance may be opened unto me, that *on me* the communications of divine grace may ever be bestowed, that Christ may be magnified by my preaching and my life, that I may be preserved faithful unto death, and then receive a crown of life.

"Accept my cordial wishes for the prosperity of your own souls, of your families, but especially of your Christian society and of the cause of Zion amongst you. Cease not to pray solemnly, fervently, and without intermission, for me, and believe me your's in our glorious Lord,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

Hoxton, Sept. 26, 1810.

This official communication to the church was accompanied by a private letter to the friend, under whose roof he had resided during his occasional visit, and to whose care the preceding document was addressed.

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No. 30.

Hoxton College, Sept. 19.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"If you wish immediately to know the purport of my enclosed answer to the respectful and pressing invitation I have received from Newington, turn to the 22d verse of the Epistle to Philemon.

"I hope you will forgive me for the long, the doubtful suspense, in which I have been obliged to detain you; in my own view I have acted rightly, and I have no doubt but you will say that it was all proper, when you come to hear my statement. It is astonishing what I have had to meet with through the *kindness* of my London friends—kindness you will think improperly manifested, when I tell you, that they, with very few exceptions, entreat, beg, and request, that I would not settle at Liverpool. I can only tell them, that in this affair,

'I hear a voice they cannot *hear*;
'I see a hand they cannot *see*!'

And have the leadings of Providence lost their importance? or the direction of Heaven become merely matter of idle talk? I have not written individually to any person in Liverpool besides yourself: I should have found a difficulty in speaking of the business before I had made known my determination. By the first Sabbath in February next year, I shall (God willing) be again in Liverpool, when I hope the presence of my covenant God will ac-

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company me, and his Spirit grant me wide success. The prospect of leaving my friends and connexions for so distant a place as Liverpool, and especially as many of them oppose the plan, sometimes fill me with melancholy gloom; but 'thy will be done' is a petition that well becomes me in my situation; may I have grace given me to use it with a sincere and believing heart.

* * * * *

"I trust it will appear, that the general good of the church of Christ, and of the inhabitants of Liverpool, is the object to which I have directed my warm and unremitting exertions. Farewell.

"I remain sincerely your's,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

To this may be added an extract from a letter, dated September 1st, 1810.

"My mind still inclines to Liverpool, and that for the most substantial reasons. If I accept this invitation, I shall be obliged to make some sacrifices; but ought I not to make them cheerfully, when the honour of God, and the happiness of immortal souls require them? especially as I am bound not to count even my life dear unto me, so that I may finish my course with joy. The sacrifices to which I allude are chiefly, perhaps altogether, occasioned by absence from my friends and connexions, and a removal from those interesting scenes of exertion which have witnessed my first efforts to disseminate divine truth, and in which I have been favoured with some success."

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Thus happily was a point of so much importance to the interests of religion in Liverpool determined. A consideration of the issue of *this* affair, together with many others perpetually occurring, should teach us to suspend our judgments of persons and places we have never seen—and should tend to weaken those unjust and injurious prejudices against them which we too hastily form—too tenaciously cherish. Often we picture to ourselves the most enchanting scenes, the most delightful associations, in connexion with a spot we are about to visit, and are disappointed—and as often we find those charming scenes, and happy associations, in regions which our prejudices had invested with every thing gloomy and repulsive. Had Spencer yielded to the impulse of his feelings, he had never become pastor of a church in Liverpool. And although the memory of his lamented fate may induce, from feelings generally regarded as honourable to humanity, a wish that he had not—yet the *Christian* sees in this the hand of God—and, contemplating the mighty work which in his short ministry he was honoured to perform, rejoices that, however mysterious the decree, it was ordered so. It is not for us to calculate whether he would have been *more* useful, or *less* useful, or *as* useful elsewhere—he *was* eminently useful in Liverpool —and though all must weep that he should be so soon, so suddenly removed—yet none who witness the extraordinary impression which his labours produced in so large and populous a town, but must rejoice in their success, and adore the Providence which brought him there.

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Nor was it from the want of other calls that Mr. Spencer was induced to accept that which he received from Liverpool. Many were the churches which desired to enjoy his valuable ministry: amongst others, the following places may be named —*Kidderminster*, *Kentish Town*, *Jewin-street*, *Worthing*, *Southampton*, and *Tonbridge Chapel*.

This last-mentioned chapel is a recently erected building, in the New-Road leading from Pentonville to Paddington, near London—in a populous, respectable, and increasing neighbourhood. During its erection, an impression was encouraged, both on Mr. Spencer's mind and that of the surrounding inhabitants, that *he* would probably be the preacher. The idea was not at all unpleasant to him. In most respects the arrangement met his wishes; and he had even laid the plan on which he resolved to act, provided his expectations had been realized. He purposed to reside a few miles out of town, to prevent the dissipation of his time, and to come to London on certain days to visit his people. He expected much gratification from the neighbourhood of his friend and fellow-student, the Rev. S. Haslock, minister of Kentish Town chapel, with whom he hoped to unite in plans of usefulness for their vicinity. But circumstances did not conspire to call into exercise those judicious and benevolent designs.

The chapel was opened early in November, 1810; and on Sunday, the 18th, he preached his first sermon there. It was in allusion to its recent opening, founded on Heb. x. 19—22. After the congregation was dismissed, he went over the whole building, the plan of which pleased him much. He was par-

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ticularly delighted with the deep front gallery, which by exhibiting a multitude of attentive faces, encouraged him, he said, in his preaching. In that chapel he frequently addressed large and deeply interested auditories—and in that pulpit a public tribute of respect was paid to his memory in a funeral sermon, delivered by the Rev. Richard Slate, minister of Stand, near Manchester.*

From the period of his acceptance of the call to Liverpool, till February, 1811, when he actually entered on the pastoral office there, his time was wholly occupied in the diligent pursuit of his studies, and the labours of the pulpit. Not a Sabbath passed, but witnessed twice or thrice his faithful publication of the gospel of peace. On Sunday, the 26th of August, he revisited Dorking—a spot endeared to him by the beauty of its scenery—but more by the memory of those happy hours, which introduced him to the knowledge and esteem of a most beloved and valued friend.

The first Sabbath in November he spent at Brighton, where he preached three times in the pulpit of the Rev. Mr. Styles.

Returning to town he continued preaching in and about London till the close of the year, when he

* Mr. Slate was formerly a fellow-student with Mr. Spencer. He was supplying the pulpit at Tonbridge chapel in the autumn of 1811, the period of Mr. Spencer's death. His discourse is founded on John v. 35, '*He was a burning and a shining light.*' It was afterwards published—and has reached a second edition. The sentiments it breathes are honourable to the author's character as a man, a Christian, and a friend.

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again visited Brighton, at which place he entered on the year 1811—the last of his life.

In what way his mind was exercised during this period—and how his principles as a Christian triumphed over his feelings as a man in the prospect of a long and painful separation from those he loved—may be seen by the following letter to a friend in Liverpool:—

No. 31.

Hoxton, December 5th, 1810.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I am persuaded that you will excuse my neglecting to write to you so long, when you recollect that the hope I daily entertained of seeing you in town appeared to represent my troubling you with an epistle as unnecessary. I am extremely pleased to hear of the increase and welfare of your family; I cannot but feel an interest in their prosperity and happiness: may the Lord pour his Spirit upon your seed, and his blessing upon your offspring, that they may spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses! I suppose I need not inform you, that I anticipate my journey to Liverpool with mingled emotions of mind. The idea of a long and painful separation from my connexions does certainly at times overwhelm me with melancholy gloom; I have not yet learned to conquer my feelings, nor am I particularly eminent for philosophic heroism. The idea that I am going where divine Providence has directed me, does occasionally impart to me strong consolation; may my wishes as to extensive

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usefulness among you be answered; may they be exceeded in the prosperity of the church and congregation, and in the increase of spirituality and holy enjoyment in my own soul!

"I am glad you are successful in getting acceptable supplies; this is a point which should be attended to. I should like the congregation to have the best of preachers. My books, &c. I must send from London before Christmas day, that I may have no trouble with them after my return from Brighton.

"I am extremely happy in the prospect of being with your family on my first entrance into Liverpool; it will be far superior to my being with strangers. This half year has been a trying one as to preaching engagements, both on Sabbaths and on week-days. I continue supplying Hoxton, and the New Chapel, Somer's Town, till Christmas: the day after Christmas day I hope to go to Brighton, to stay there three Sabbaths, and to return on the 17th of January, to supply Roydon, and Hertford the next week; and the last Sabbath in January, to take my leave of this part of the kingdom by two sermons at Hoxton.

* * * * *

"Tell our friends at Newington chapel that I am tolerably well, and wish to be kindly remembered to them. Farewell, my valued friend.

"I am sincerely your's,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

The purposes expressed in this letter were accomplished according to the order in which they are stated. He visited Brighton, and preached on

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the last Sabbath of the old year three times, at Mr. Styles' chapel—in the evening a sermon adapted to the season, from 1 John ii. 17, '*And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever!*' On the evening of the 1st of January, 1811, he preached an appropriate discourse at the Countess of Huntingdon's chapel; and on the following Thursday, and three times on the Sunday, he preached at Mr. Styles'. On the Monday evening, being the first Monday in the month, the missionary prayer meeting was held in Brighton, when he delivered a most animated and impressive address from Mat. xiii. 16—17, '*Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*' He continued another Sabbath in Brighton, and left that place some time in the following week. Passing through London, he went into Hertfordshire. On Sunday, January the 20th, he preached at Roydon, morning and afternoon, and at Hoddesdon in the evening. On the Tuesday evening he preached at Hertford, and slept again under his paternal roof. On Wednesday evening he preached at Stansted, and on Thursday evening again at Hertford. This was, I believe, his last visit to his native town, and to his father's house! The separation which then again took place between himself and his beloved family was final. The farewell which he bade to the scenes of his infancy and childhood was eternal! I cannot suppress the

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melancholy feeling which this reflection has awakened in my mind. I am arrived at length upon the eve of a mournful detail, which all along I have anticipated with emotions of distress. Alas! that one so useful should be so soon removed! And that ere we enter on the solemn engagements of his pastoral life, we should be compelled to notice circumstances so closely connected with his death!

The following Sabbath, January 27th, was the last he spent in London. On that day he preached in the morning at Hoxton chapel, from Phil. iii. 8, '*Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*' And in the evening at Tonbridge chapel, from 2 Cor. iv. 3, '*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.*' The labours of this Sabbath completed his engagements at Hoxton and Tonbridge chapels; but on the evening of the following day (Monday) he took an affectionate leave of his beloved friends—the constituents—the tutors—the students—and the congregation at Hoxton, from the pulpit of that chapel. The crowd that pressed to hear his last sermon (for so it proved) in London was immense. One common sentiment of attachment and grief seemed to pervade the assembly. A friend charged him on that occasion not to play upon the passions. Not that he was in the habit of doing this; but there appeared on this occasion a probability that he might. To that suggestion he replied—that "neither his feelings nor his conscience would admit of such trifling." He addressed the people on this interesting occasion from those memorable words of Paul—Acts xx. 24, '*But none of*

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*these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus.'**

Thus were Spencer's labours in the metropolis closed forever—labours—the renewal of which thousands anticipated with delight. But he was ripening fast for glory—and rapidly advancing to the termination of his course. Yea, the impression of his excellence—the feeling of regret at his departure—was yet strong and lively in the hearts of many, when the tidings of his death shed a deeper sorrow through the scenes and circles which he had edified by his public instructions, or enlivened by his private friendship!

It was on the 28th of January, that Mr. Spencer preached his farewell sermon at Hoxton chapel—and it was on the 15th of August, in the same year, in the same pulpit—and to nearly the same congregation—that his funeral sermon was delivered by the Rev. Henry Forster Burder, one of the tutors of the academy. In that discourse, a just and elegant tribute was paid to the mingled piety and talent which formed the charm of his ministry. From the known endowments of the preacher, and from the opportunities which he enjoyed of obtaining a correct estimate of Mr. Spencer's powers, that tribute must derive considerable propriety and force: and as it chiefly regards his ministerial labours in London, I shall close these imperfect memoirs of them with an extract from it.

"During the last two years of our valuable friend's residence at Hoxton, he was very frequently engaged

* See Appendix, No. IV.

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in preaching in London and its vicinity. As this chapel has been, on many occasions, the scene of his labours, and has been often thronged with the multitudes attracted by his abilities and piety, I need scarcely attempt an estimate of his pulpit talents. That they were eminent—that they were brilliant—that they were captivating—will not, I think, be denied by any who witnessed their exhibition. He undoubtedly displayed no small degree of pulpit eloquence, and his eloquence was distinguised by characteristic features. It was not the kind of eloquence in which a youth of genius might be expected most to excel, and of which luxuriance of imagination constitutes the chief attraction; it was not a peculiar vivacity of fancy, which gave life to his addresses, although in this respect they were not deficient; but they rather owed their effect to the energy and animation infused by the ardour of his soul, and to the unaffected fervour of his religious feelings, the impression of which was aided by no small advantages of person, voice, and elocution. In endeavouring rightly to appreciate his qualifications for the duties of the Christian ministry, I must not omit to notice the truly edifying manner in which he conducted the devotional exercises of the pulpit. His gift in prayer was peculiarly excellent. The language of his petitions seemed to breathe the ardent aspirations of a heart alive to God, and accustomed to enjoy followship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."*

* See a Sermon, delivered in Hoxton chapel, on the death of the Rev. T. Spencer, by the Rev. Henry Forster Burder, M. A. one of the tutors of the Hoxton Academy—page 32.

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That he was maturing fast for the enjoyment of his reward, even when he left London to commence his pastoral engagements, is a conviction indelibly impressed upon the minds of those who were accustomed to attend his preaching, or mingle in his society. They remember certain expressions, both of countenance and language, which seemed to indicate a tone of piety—a spirituality of feeling—too exalted for a long continuance here. And it is to be regretted, that such expressions, at the time so powerful in their influence, and so carefully preserved by a tenacious memory, no pen—no pencil can portray. Hence the sermons of animated and extemporary preachers, when introduced to us from the press, lose half their force and beauty. The scope of the discourse—the process of the argument—may be indeed preserved; but the unpremeditated, momentary flashes of holy fervour, and of brilliant genius, cannot. The eloquence of the eye—the expression of the countenance—the meaning which is sometimes thrown into every limb and muscle of the frame—are wanting.—And though 'tis pleasing to possess a memorial of those, whom living we revered and loved, yet the imperfection of the copy only deepens our regret at the loss of the original. In the preaching of Spencer, it seemed as though he saw before him every object he described—and felt the full force—the vast importance of every subject upon which he spoke.

Preaching one evening at Back-street, Horsley-Down, and speaking of the reward of the faithful gospel minister, "Methinks," said he, "I already hear the melodious accents of the Saviour's voice,

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saying '*Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord.*" It was remarked, that he appeared as though he heard a voice personally addressing him. His anticipation was in a very few months realized!

Anxious for the usefulness and variety of his ministry, he begged of his friend, upon his leaving London, to send him any useful pamphlets or works which might come out; "Let me know," said he, "when popular ministers are in town—the texts they take for particular occasions—festivals, &c. the settling or removal of my fellow students," &c.

The last time he was with his friend alone, prior to his setting off for Liverpool, their approaching separation was, as may be well imagined, the topic of discourse—when, with his own peculiar affection and energy, he said—

"Through Christ when we together came,
In singleness of heart,
We met, O Jesus! in thy name;
And in thy name we part.

We part in body, *not in mind,*
Our minds continue one;
And each to each, in Jesus join'd,
We happily go on.

Present in spirit still we are,
And intimately nigh;
While on the wings of faith and prayer,
We Abba! Father! cry.

O may thy Spirit, dearest Lord,
In all our travels still
Direct and be our constant guard
To Zion's holy hill.

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Oh! what a joyful meeting there,
Beyond these *changing* shades;
White are the robes we then shall wear,
And crowns upon our heads.

Haste, Lord, and bring us to the day
When we shall dwell at home,
Come, O Redeemer, come away;
O Jesus quickly come."

On Sunday, 3d of February, 1811, Mr. Spencer commenced his stated, pastoral labours at Newington chapel, Liverpool. He was then just twenty years of age—possessed of every endowment that could render him eminent as a minister—and every amiable disposition that could endear him as a friend. The people of his charge, together with numbers who participated with them in their joy, hailed his entrance on his sacred duties with delight. From him they fondly anticipated a long series of varied and useful instructions—on him they gazed with admiration, as affording them no mean example of a holy and devoted life—and to him they looked with pleasure as their children's friend. That he was prepared to meet these high expectations, none who have contemplated the superior endowments of his mind can, for a moment, doubt—his literary attainments, though not splendid, were respectable—his theological knowledge was considerable—his acquaintance with mankind indeed was scanty; he had only moved amongst the excellent of the earth; but this, while it might expose him to certain inconveniences, gave him this advantage—that he appeared in all the native ingenuousness of unsuspecting youth. His love of study was great, which in-

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sured a constant supply of interesting materials for his public ministry—whilst he possessed a facility, an ease, an elegance, in the communication of his thoughts, displayed by few. To all these, he added the graces of the Spirit in no common degree—the glorious attributes of a soul eminently devoted to God—a solemn awe of his sacred office—an habitual reference to the final account he should be called to render—and an ardent zeal for the Redeemer's glory!—Such was Spencer when he entered on the duties of his stated ministry!

But I shall justify this sketch of his character by some extracts from his letters.

In one dated Brighton, January the 9th, 1811, he says—

"I dread the termination of the happiness I now enjoy. It will be the commencement of a long and agonizing separation. Oh! that henceforth I may live more devotedly to God than I have ever yet done. I can truly say this is my desire; for to be a preacher of the gospel, and not to feel its *due abiding* influence on the heart, is awful indeed. Since I have been here I have trembled for myself, when I have recollected the numerous follies of the four years I have spent at Hoxton. The Lord pardon me, and teach me to be more holy. Pray for me. Affectionately your's,——"

Mr. Spencer is certainly a striking example of what some persons are unwilling to admit—the possibility of a close and humble walk with God, even amid the snares and temptations of an academ— That in colleges, even the best regulated, te—

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tions to levity exist, cannot be denied. Where many young men, of a lively turn of mind, are associated, it must be so. But although such a spirit may be partially, and at intervals encouraged—yet where there is true piety, the mind will be elevated above their *habitual* influence, and occasional instances of failure will excite to diligence for the future, whilst they awaken deep regret and poignant sorrow for the past. If to this there was a natural tendency in Spencer's constitution, how sweetly is the influence of better principles displayed in the humility with which he confesses and deplores his error. If upon this page the eye of a cold, phlegmatic, stern professor should dwell, let it not be averted in disgust, when it beholds this amiable youth's confession of an error, of a temptation to which he is incapable—and to others, if such there be, who happy to discover in such a character, any thing like the shadow of a fault, should be preparing to pronounce a censorious and malignant judgment, I would say —'*Let him that is without sin cast the first stone.*'

The following letter was written the day after his arrival in Liverpool.

No. 32.

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

Liverpool, February 2d, 1811.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I am safely arrived at the scene of my future labours. My journey, though long, was far less irksome than any one I have before undertaken.

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The roads were bad; this made us late in our arrival at Liverpool. We did not reach it till a quarter before twelve last night. The short time that I have yet spent here has been quite *pleasant*—it has been *happy*. The serious people of the congregation have already paid me many kind and Christian attentions. With the blessing of the Master whom I serve, I expect to-morrow to spend a very delightful Sabbath. My best feelings for the glory of our Lord, and the increase of his kingdom, will I hope be more strongly excited than ever they have yet been. I cannot but think that the Head of the Church has some great work to accomplish in Liverpool, and the desire of my heart is that I may be the instrument employed to effect it. Oh! for a large measure of the influence of the blessed Spirit to render me ardently pious, and to keep me zealous in my endeavours to do good to souls. I know *here* are numbers who *pray* earnestly for me, and whilst these pious people besiege the throne of grace on my behalf, I will not fear that my God will desert me. —To be holy and to be useful at this moment, appears to be the first wish of my heart. Do you say, 'indulgent God, let it be accomplished!'

"I am tired with my journey and pressed for time. Believe me, in the bonds of Christian affection,

"Sincerely your's,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

According to his anticipation, he did enjoy on the Sabbath a happy day, although in the morning he was considerably agitated by the peculiarly solemn

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circumstances of his new and most responsible situation. In the morning his text was admirably adapted to the occasion.—Gen. xxviii. 22—'*And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace: then shall the Lord be my God, and this stone which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house, and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.*' In the evening he preached from 1 Cor. xv. 49,—'*And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*' In the course of the ensuing week, he wrote as follows:

No. 33.

Liverpool, Feb. 7, 1811.

"Oh! what a memorable day to me was the first Sabbath I spent in this place; every circumstance that took place appeared worthy of attention and big with events; never before had I entered a pulpit, with those awful, solemn feelings with which I was impressed that morning. The idea of appearing in a new character, of entering on a station which I have no view of relinquishing till the day of my death; the weight of responsibility which attaches to the ministerial character; the dread lest I should act in any way unworthy of my sacred office; all these things would naturally impart an unusual solemnity to the mind. On THAT DAY heaven is my witness of the holy resolution I

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formed. Oh! that God may ever enable me to put them in execution."

The attention which his labours had excited, while an occasional supply, was repeated, now that he had commenced his stated ministry. Soon the chapel became again crowded to excess. The town was filled with his praise—the most respectable of the inhabitants were perpetually disappointed in their attempts to hear him, not being in any way able to gain admittance to the chapel, so excessive was the throng. His coming seemed to be the commencement of a new era in the religious interests of Liverpool—at least amongst the dissenters. The prejudices of many were gradually subdued. The tone of public sentiment, with respect to that class of Christians amongst whom he laboured, considerably raised. Many, by no means anxious to conceal their opposition to his principles, were compelled to pay a just, though reluctant tribute to the fascinations of his eloquence; and many whom the fame of that eloquence brought beneath the sound of his voice were savingly converted unto God; and of these, some are at this moment honourable members of the church of which he was the pastor.

So far from being elated by his popularity, and rendered vain by the uncommon attention he excited and received from all ranks—every Sabbath, while he grew in public estimation, he seemed to sink in his own esteem, in humble acknowledgments of his own unworthiness, and in a yet deeper sense of his awful obligations. The next is an extract of a letter to his father.

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No. 34.

Liverpool, February 26, 1811.

"I assure you I have every reason to believe, that this is the sphere in which Infinite Wisdom intends me to move. My congregation is vast every time I dispense the word of life. A general spirit of hearing seems excited in this large town —the prospect is in every respect encouraging, and I am induced to hope, that great good will be done. I feel the awful responsibility that attaches to my employment; and when I recollect the multitude of souls committed to my care, I tremble, and exclaim '*Who is sufficient for these things?*' I often think how different is my situation now, to what it was when I lived at my father's house. I am called to an active and laborious scene. Once it was enough for me just to execute your wishes, and then in the quiet enjoyment of our own family circle to experience satisfaction and comfort. Now God has blessed me by making me a blessing to others. May he preserve me faithful, and make me an honourable and holy Christian!"

In another letter to his father, dated April the 9th, 1811, he says—

"The interest excited in this town is still lively and great. I trust much good is done. Prejudices are removed, convictions are impressed on the mind, and the cause of Satan appears to tremble under the influence of the doctrines of the Cross."

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This is indeed a portrait worthy the attention of the candidate for the Christian ministry—the student and the minister. It is charming to behold such excellence, so universally applauded, veiled from its own observation by such deep humility. Some have indulged in speculations on the probable influence of Spencer's popularity upon his character, had he been spared. It is *possible* that its influence might have been injurious; he was a *man*, though he was a *Christian*. But it is ungenerous and unjust to his memory to cherish any gloomy suspicions on the subject, when, long as he *did* live, he sustained the Christian character with unsullied purity, and descended to the grave the same holy, humble, and devoted youth, as when emerging from the obscurity of his birth, the world first witnessed his unfolding powers.

To the extracts already made, illustrative of his humility, I shall add another—which as it is without date, may be well introduced here.

No. 35.

TO A MINISTER.

"I have at length taken up my pen to return you my sincere acknowledgments for the lively interest you take in my welfare and happiness, and especially for the excellent advice you have given me, as to the faithfulness of my preaching, and the circumspection necessary in my conduct. Oh! never may I be left to indifference in the statement

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of those glorious truths, which may well demand the glowing fervour of our souls, since their importance is declared to us by the blood of the Lamb! May the same Saviour be honoured by my feeble ministrations, whom I know you delight to extol. You have been long engaged in endeavouring to give Him a high place in the affections—and a throne in the hearts of the people. This, however, is a glorious cause, in which I have but lately embarked; yet may the same Holy Spirit, who has enabled the heralds of salvation in every age to testify of Jesus, make *my* tongue ever to tell his excellence, warm my heart to feel his love, and influence my conduct to show forth his praise! I think I hear you add, Amen!"

The following is also without date:—

No. 36.

TO —— ——.

Liverpool.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I earnestly wish for you the support and the care of our constant and unchangeable friend, the Lord Jesus Christ: every day seems to convince me of the necessity and the happiness of a close walk with God: let us be always trusting in God, and praying to him, and there is no doubt but he will preserve and bless us. I was much pleased with an instance of resignation to the Divine Will I lately met with. A pious and valuable mem-

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ber of our congregation lost his property, to a considerable amount, by an alarming fire. I was with him soon after it happened, and it would have done you good to have heard him say, with so much calm and sacred acquiescence as he discovered, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." I could not but wish that in all times of trial, I and my friends might have the same God to strengthen and fortify the mind as he had. Indeed you were mistaken, my worthy friend, when you judged my letter to you an expression of joy at separation from my friends. No, No. There is not a heart in the world that feels more truly and sincerely on such occasions than my own; but I wish ever to remember the great object of my existence, and of my call to the ministry—not selfish ends but the glory of my God; and when he commands, whatever flesh and blood might suggest, or carnal wishes desire, I must immediately obey. It is this thought, and the persuasion that I am employed in the vineyard of the Lord, *just according to His will*, that give me composure and peace of mind; and I can witness that prayer unloads and eases the mind as much at Liverpool as any where else. Here I hope I have felt such salutary convictions of the awful responsibility of my work, as I never knew before, and as I hope I shall never forget; and happy am I to find, that *here* there are many of the Lord's jewels, his choicest favourites, many who call on the name of the Lord Jesus, both theirs and ours, out of a pure heart and faith unfeigned. In our prayer meeting, I have enjoyed a heaven begun below, and that kind of devotion

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which can well repay me for the sacrifices I have made. I suppose you have heard of the prospects of usefulness which open themselves before me: may I have grace to improve every hour of my time to the service of my God, and to maintain that holiness and integrity of conduct which will recommend the glorious gospel I proclaim. According to my arrangements, I expect to be in town in May. Remember me affectionately to our friends. I often think of the pleasant opportunities we have enjoyed together, and often wish you resided here. Whenever you see Mr. H——, of W——, give my respects to him. I highly esteem him, because he discovers much of the image and spirit of Christ; and these are excellencies which must be loved by us, if we are Christians, wherever we find them. May the God of peace be with you, and ever keep you near himself. Pray for me, that I may have all needful grace and assistance. Write as soon as possible, and ever view me

"Your affectionate friend,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

But scarcely had Spencer entered on the full discharge of his public duties at Liverpool, when severe affliction in the endeared circle of his connexions at Brighton called him to that place. A letter written about this period, displays the agonized state of his feelings—but abounds with expressions of holy acquiescence in the Divine dispensations. He left Liverpool on the 18th of March, accompanied by the valued friend, under whose roof he still resided, and whose guest he was during his first visit. Arrived

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in London, the following hasty note bespeaks the anguish of his mind.

Ludgate-street, Tuesday Night.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"This moment I am within a few doors of you, but cannot reach you. Mr. H—— is with me: we have just got in from Liverpool, and start for B. to-morrow, at seven o'clock in the morning. I shall write to you from Brighton. Pray for me; I am in unutterable distress. Farewell!

"T. SPENCER."

The Sabbath after his arrival in Brighton, he did not engage in any public service. Much of the day doubtless was spent in administering comfort to the afflicted. The fears which he had sometimes been induced to harbour, were not, however, realized; health slowly returned. His friend was under the necessity of hastening to Liverpool, after the lapse of a few days—but Mr. Spencer remained at Brighton. His affectionate heart dictated the following letter, to welcome his friend on his arrival home.

No. 87.

TO MR. H——.

Brighton, Thursday Morning.

"MY DEAR AND VALUED FRIEND,

"I am pleasing myself with the idea, that before this reaches Liverpool, you will have shared the hearty and affectionate welcome of a beloved and

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happy family: this is a blessing which you know how to improve and enjoy aright, and for which I am persuaded you will express the sincerest gratitude to the God of our mercies. May the same kind and watchful Providence, which has I trust led you to your home in peace and safety, also preserve and defend me, that I may be again restored to the church and congregation at Newington, and be enabled to pursue a course of active and useful labour in the service of the Master whom I hope I really love.

"I frequently think that by this visit to Brighton on so mournful an occasion, I shall be better fitted to sympathize with the afflicted in general, and be taught how to commend them to God. Before this I had not been at all familiar with scenes of sorrow and distress. In the two sick rooms you visited last Monday evening, I have learned lessons which I shall never forget, and the benefit of which may probably be communicated to the Church of Christ, as well as to myself.

"Our Redeemer himself, in order to be rendered a merciful and compassionate high-priest, was '*tempted like as we are*;' endured the various ills and sorrows that flesh is heir to; and hence (oh! blessed sympathy and kind relief) he is able to succour them that are tempted.

"Next Sabbath morning I intend to preach at the Countess' chapel, and in the evening at Mr. Styles': pray for me, that I may be supported and blest. It is still my design to reach Liverpool on Friday night: tell our friends, that they may expect to see me in the pulpit on the following Sabbath. May I be there richly laden with the good things of the kingdom;—

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may I be animated by a mind fraught with rich and heavenly favours. I am sure that if my God restores those who are so dear to me to perfect health and strength, my heart, hard as it is, will not be insensible to the feeling of gratitude. No;—it will leap as doth a hart; it will pant with the sensations of unutterable joy. I have received a very kind letter from our worthy friend, Mr. N. H——; do tell him it afforded me real pleasure, and give him my hearty thanks for his solicitude for my happiness. I hope you are going on well with the new Chapel business; if possible, let us make Satan tremble; against the kingdom of darkness let us use the most active and unwearied exertions, and God shall bless us in our deed. I wish I could have attended the meeting of the Bible Society; my absence however was unavoidable. Give my affectionate regards to my dear friend Mrs. H—— and to your dear children. I hope I shall soon see you all happy and well. Your unremitting kindness to me has produced impressions upon my mind which will never be obliterated. I shall be happy again to mix with your family circle, and to occupy my own pulpit. To the hearers at Newington I intend to shew my regard and best wishes, by constantly labouring in their service.

"I am more than ever your's,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

The uncommon attention excited in Liverpool by Mr. Spencer's ministry, soon suggested the necessity of providing more accommodation than Newington chapel could afford, for the numbers who were anxious to enjoy the benefit of his stated labours. At

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first the idea of enlarging the old place of worship presented itself; but some difficulties arising, this was relinquished, and early in March it was resolved, that a chapel capable of accommodating two thousand persons should be erected—a committee of management was appointed—and an eligible spot of ground soon selected for the purpose. A most judicious plan for the building was proposed and adopted—the dimensions of which were thirty-two yards long outside, and twenty-one yards and a half broad outside. A liberal subscription was soon obtained, and the affair was in a state of such forwardness on his return from Brighton, that on the 15th of April, Mr. Spencer laid the first stone of the chapel, in the presence of an immense assembly—computed to consist of about six thousand persons. On that truly interesting occasion, he delivered an appropriate address, and solemnly dedicated the place to God by prayer.*

About this time Mr. Spencer removed from the hospitable abode of his early friend, with whom he had resided on his first coming to Liverpool, in order to lodge with Mr. Thurstan Lassell, in the Park Road; a pleasant situation, about half a mile from the town. It was the lot of Spencer to be beloved in every circle which he entered—and none who were honoured to behold his excellence, and enjoy his friendship, ever resigned him, without feelings of the deepest regret. I cannot deny myself the

* For the oration delivered at the foundation of the chapel—and also for an account of the services performed at its opening in May, 1812—see Appendix, No. V.

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pleasure of extracting a sentence or two from the willing testimony which that friend has borne to the sterling worth of his amiable guest. I am the more anxious to do this, as it will unveil his character in private life, and shew us, what he was as the member of a family.

"We had the great advantage of Mr. Spencer's pious conversation and fervent prayers in the family for near four months, for he did not leave us till the latter end of April; it was indeed a pleasant, and I trust, a profitable season, which we often review with great delight. With what pleasing emotions have we often surrounded our domestic altar, and witnessed the fervour of his addresses to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this delightful employ, he never seemed to engage with half a heart, his whole soul was alive to the service of his God: he was serious in a serious cause, nor did any circumstances that arose ever seem to unfit him for the discharge of religious duties. Morning and evening he generally engaged in prayer at family worship; the variety he produced on these occasions has often astonished us; it was impossible to trace any thing like repetition, every prayer seemed quite new, and gave fresh proof of the powers of his mind, and the ardour of his soul.

"Mr. Spencer naturally possessed an amiable disposition, and was innocently cheerful; no one could say that gloom or melancholy was connected with his religion. In his manners he was simple and unaffected; any thing like ostentation or parade he disliked exceedingly; he would always, if possible, avoid mixing with large parties. The company of

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serious, pious, plain Christians was his delight. He was kind, generous, and tender-hearted; the wants of the poor and necessitous he was ready and willing to relieve; 'To do good and communicate he forgot not, knowing that with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

But whilst all around him was prosperous and happy—whilst his ministry was successful beyond his most sanguine expectations—and hundreds were eager to administer to his comfort—his heart was the victim of anxiety and grief. The continued and alarming indisposition of his friends at Brighton, inspired his delicate and susceptible mind with the most gloomy and agonizing fears. It was well. His heavenly Father saw he needed some thorn in the flesh, under the circumstances of his unexampled popularity, to prevent his being exalted above measure—and to preserve his soul in a frame of holy solemnity, and humble reliance on himself. Lest the sun of his prosperity should dazzle him too much, these friendly clouds were permitted to intervene. Their salutary influence may be traced in the following letter:—

No. 88.

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

Liverpool, April 16, 1811.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"The melancholy state of depression in which I have been held so long, must form my excuse for neglecting the sacred duties of friendship,

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in not writing before this to you.——Oh! how soon can Jehovah blast our hopes of happiness from creature comforts, to convince us of the uncertainty of all earthly good! We *must* "walk by faith," and live in the exercise of a lively hope, that we shall obtain a better and more permanent rest.– I scarcely dare, for my own part, anticipate any other kind of happiness on earth, but what may arise from communion with the Saviour, and the delightful work in which I am engaged, which, I must say, amidst all my trials affords me increasing happiness and pleasure. Thanks be to God, the work of the Lord is prospering in my hand; and though I may not have much pleasure in this world myself, I hope I shall be the means, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, of putting into the possession of my fellow creatures, real and substantial felicity; *this*, the gospel I am enabled to preach is sent to confer. The next week I expect to go to my lodgings. I shall reside in a retired rural and delightful spot, with a family, (three only in number) who belong to the congregation in which the Lord has graciously called me to labour; it is about half a mile from the town, away from all bustle and noise, commanding a most delightful and enchanting prospect of both land and water. My study affords a most extensive view of fields and hills, the river, and the adjacent county (Cheshire.) I am persuaded it is every thing I could wish for as a plan for my residence. In that pleasant study* I expect to spend much time, and

* To me it is a melancholy reflection, that I should so soon become the occupier of a spot in which he had fondly pictured to himself so many years of pleasure. In his own

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enjoy some degree of pleasure; and my dear friend will believe me when I assure him, that amidst the afflictions which our righteous Father judges the best schools for me, it would tend to alleviate my sorrowst and cheer my spirits, could he be in my new study, and as he did in my old one, occasionally spend an hour or two with me in social chat.

"Yesterday I laid the foundation stone of my new chapel, gave an address upon the spot, and dedicated the place to God in solemn prayer. The auditory consisted of not less than five thousand people, who were all fixed in their attention. May I, on that ground, often find a solace for my cares, in the public worship of God! May he bless the undertaking! May his eyes and his heart be there perpetually!

"Farewell—I *must* break off by assuring you, that I am sincerely your's,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

The week following that in which he laid the foundation stone of the new chapel, Mr. Spencer made an excursion into the country, and preached on the Tuesday evening at *Darwen*, and on the Thursday evening at a meeting of ministers at *Blackburn*.

study—on his own table—in his own chair—I am now drawing up these memoirs of his life;—around me are the fruits of his short, but laborious exertions—and immediately before my eyes the path by which he descended to his grave! From every object within my view, I am admonished, '*work whilst it is day, for the night cometh, when no man can work.*' I would that every loiterer in the vineyard of Christ were attended by mementos such as these.

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During this journey, he suffered much from the complaint to which he was subject—but although labouring under the pressure of severe indisposition, in the pulpit he rose superior to the influence of langour and pain—and his exertions on that journey are still spoken of by those who witnessed them, and they were many, with delight.

On his return to Liverpool, Mr. Spencer received a melancholy summons to Chester, to attend the funeral of his early and amiable friend, the Rev. Ebenezer White, and to deliver the oration at his grave. His obligations and attachment to that excellent man have already been recorded. When arrived at the scene of death, his delicate mind seemed overwhelmed in an agony of grief. He stood weeping in unutterable distress over the cold remains of his departed friend. His bosom formed for friendship, and even then the seat of no ordinary sorrow, was ill prepared to sustain the pressure of a stroke, by which he was suddenly bereft of one who had discharged for him the relations of the father, the tutor, and the friend! Mr. Walter White, who was the witness of his grief, has thus described it:—"I shall not easily forget this dear young man's behaviour on the evening preceding my brother's funeral at Chester. We were standing together by the side of the coffin, viewing the corpse—he wept excessively, and clasping his hands with great emotion exclaimed, 'Oh! that I may but finish my course like him!' and turning to me, he said with his usual energy, 'Oh! what a fine thought it is, that the *bodies* of the saints are purchased by Christ as well as their souls.' And then passing his friendly

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hand gently over my brother's face, he said, with great emphasis, 'This body is the purchase of Christ: it cannot be lost—it must revive again—all these limbs must resume their activity. Oh! with what fine sentiments and ideas does the Christian religion furnish us to what any of the heathen systems did!"

Though excessively agitated in his whole frame, he yet sustained himself to deliver at the grave a funeral oration, characterized by tender and solemn eloquence—the eloquence of feeling and of piety.

His letters to his friends for some time after this event, contain occasional allusions to the death of Mr. White—and in a way which proves how much he loved him—how deeply he deplored his loss. In one he says—

"I have lately been visiting a scene of death at Chester: my worthy friend Mr. White is now no more in this world; but I doubt not, he shines illustriously in another state of existence. When I was eleven years of age he came to Hertford, and used to spend a great deal of time with me: ah! little did I then think I should have to deliver a funeral address at his interment, and so far away too from the place with which we were then familiar. Peace to his ashes, and eternal joy to his departed spirit! and ere long may I meet him in that blessed state, where disappointments will no longer be his lot or mine."

On the Sabbath evening following, Mr. Spencer preached a funeral sermon for his friend, in his own pulpit at Liverpool, from Deut. xxxiv. 5, '*So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Mo-*

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ab, according to the word of the Lord.' The sermon was solemn and impressive. Thus we record the mortality of others, and drop into eternity ourselves. On that Sabbath evening three months, his own funeral sermon was preached in the same pulpit.

The following letter was written the day before the funeral of Mr. White :—

No. 39.

TO MR. HADDON.

May 13th, 1811.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I am ashamed when I think of the length of time which has passed since I last wrote to you; but indeed since then I have scarcely written to any one, so much have I been occupied. What a beautiful and admirable narrative is the Dairyman's Daughter; if you can, get me two hundred of them, and send me the very first opportunity: they are just the kind of publication I want for several of my hearers. Procure me too some of the Negro Servant, and of all the interesting modern tracts, which your own discretion may suggest. The Rev. Ebenezer White of Chester, has entered into the joy of his Lord. He was formerly settled at Hertford. I knew him, and highly esteemed him. I am going o his funeral. Oh! how uncertain is human life! how necessary that habitual frame of piety which the Holy Spirit can impart to his believing favourites! May we both enjoy the sanctity of religion, love it for its *purity*, and be enabled to discern its

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holy excellencies; then we shall show that our regeneration is real, and our hope of heaven well supported. God is showing me more and more of the uncertainty of all things here, and the necessity of living the blessed life of faith upon the Son of God, who, I sometimes think I can say, "*loved me*, and gave himself for me." I study a good deal, and find increasing pleasure in it. In visiting, as yet I have done but very little. The families I am most intimate with, are the *serious*, the pious followers of Christ; for I find that these alone can help me to comfort under my own trials, or in any way do me real good. But I know I must not be selfish. I must labour to do good in any way I can possibly think of.

"I am much pleased with my lodgings; the situation is so retired and beautiful, that it is every thing I can wish. I doubt not but you continue to pray for me, and I need your prayers. I feel the awful responsibility of my work, and my own unfitness for it. I long to '*present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*' Remember me affectionately to all our friends.

"I am sincerely your's,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

Mr. Spencer seemed now to become more and more interested in his important work; the scenes of every day appeared to present it to his mind in some new and interesting light. The powers of his soul were absorbed in its concerns. He could think and speak of nothing else. In the pulpit, or in preparations for it—in serious conversation with his friends—or in the chambers of the diseased and dy-

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ing, he was at home. He lived but for the discharge of his high obligations; and in the prosecution of his arduous work he was both useful and happy. With astonishing rapidity his character and talents ripened. He seemed to grow daily in favour both with God and man. All that *saw* him, admired him, there was something so engaging in his manner—all that *heard* him, respected and revered him, so serious and important were the truths which he delivered—all that *knew* him, loved him, for his was every amiable quality that could excite and retain the best affections of the human heart.

Valuable as our public institutions for the education of students for the Christian ministry really are, they can afford but an inadequate conception of the complicated duties of the pastoral office. The work of the pulpit is perhaps, after all, not the most difficult or trying part of the pastor's employ—and the reason why so many fail when called into active service in the Church of God, is probably this, that never calculated upon one half of the engagements which then press upon their regard. They had formed a most incorrect estimate of the numerous claims which the office of the ministry involves, upon their time—their talents—their patience—and their faith. They had imagined, that in the composition and delivery of sermons was the chief of their labour—and that when this duty was discharged, by far the heaviest burden was removed. The visitation of the sick, with all the peculiar delicacy, prudence, affection, and faithfulness which it requires—the consolation of the distressed, with all the caution and skill which the varieties of their grief de-

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mand—the reproof and admonition of the irregular, with all the mingled tenderness, constancy and fidelity, which, in such difficult cases, must be exercised—the care of the young, with that adaptation of temper and manner to their capacities which, in the work of catechising, familiar conversation or public instruction, is absolutely necessary—the advising, comforting and relieving the distressed, the embarrassed, and the indigent, who all press to him for counsel, solace and relief;—these, and unnumbered other duties connected with the pastoral office, are perhaps but seldom contemplated with sufficient seriousness amid the exercises of a college. And even in the *public* engagements of ministry, the circumstances of the *pastor* differ materially from those of the *student*. The pulpit compositions of the student are *general;* those of the pastor must be *particular*. The student has no individual case to suit; the congregation to whom he preaches are strangers to him; the pastor has as many cases as there are people committed to his charge. The stude *Je-* select his topics, and adapt his preaching to the tone of his mind—or if peculiar reluctance should be felt, may enjoy the repose he wishes, and not preach at all; but the pastor *must* appear at the stated hours of worship, whatever be the frame and temper of his soul. Often he is called to the discussion of subjects but ill adapted to his feelings; and it becomes his duty to administer consolation to others which *his* bleeding bosom needs, but cannot take. He must sometimes cover with a smiling countenance an aching heart; and his lips must exhort to tranquility and confidence in God, whilst

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over his own spirit broods the cloud of anxiety and sorrow! Happy shall I be if the perusal of these imperfect memoirs tend to excite in the breast of any a spirit of Christian sympathy and prayer for the ministers of the gospel; or if these statements of the labours and anxieties of their office, shall induce those to pause and count the mighty cost, who may be thoughtlessly pressing forward to the arduous work. Let such remember the worth of souls—the guilt of becoming accessary to their ruin—and the solemn account all must render at the bar of God, who have taken upon themselves the responsibility of seeking, by every possible method, to promote their eternal interests.

These considerations seemed ever present to the view of Spencer. The feelings of an affectionate and faithful pastor's heart breathe in every sentence of the following letter.

No. 40.

TO MR. HADDON.

Liverpool, May 31, 1811.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"You really must excuse my apparent neglect in not writing you before; but if you knew the number and pressing nature of my avocations, you would not wonder. I now feel, and deeply too, the dreadful responsibility of my employment. I have sick beds constantly to attend—a numerous congregation committed to my charge—a character to sustain, which ought ever to appear *free*, even

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from the very *appearance* of evil—and all this with the most depressed state of feelings, and but little experience of the arduous duties the course of the Christian ministry embraces. Often do I exclaim, '*who is sufficient for these things?*' Oh! that I may find that my sufficiency is of God. I am led at times to derive encouragement from the good which I trust the blessed Spirit has accomplished by my feeble labours; but then I think again of my youth, my inexperience, my exposure to the fiery darts of the wicked one, and the *possibility* of my eventually becoming '*a cast-away.*'

"Oh! there are many feelings of this painful class in my mind, which few can share, which I cannot dare frequently to communicate.

"All this, and much more, do I daily feel. I wish you were with me. I could say a thousand things I cannot write, and you might console me with the comforts wherewith you yourself are comforted of God! Do pray for me, for I need it more than ever now. Often do I dispense to others that consolation I cannot take myself.

"Thank you a thousand times for Cecil. Oh! they are admirable; what a character was he. Oh! that the Head of the Church would but make me like him. The tracts are just what I wanted; may a Divine blessing attend the distribution of them. Farewell! "I am your's affectionately,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

In another letter he writes:

"Cecil's works are a high treat indeed: you cannot think how I enjoy the perusal of them. There are such valuable hints for ministers—such inesti-

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mable directions, that I hope I shall evince the benefit of reading them, to the last hour of the day in which I am appointed to work!"

The church and congregation at Liverpool now became anxious for Mr Spencer's ordination, and Thursday the 27th of June was appointed for that solemn service. In the following letter he announced it to his early friend and patron, Mr. Wilson, whose presence on that occasion he earnestly desired.

No. 41.

TO THOMAS WILSON, ESQ.

Liverpool, June 4, 1811.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I am happy to inform you, that Thursday June the 27th is the day appointed for my ordination. Will you allow me to expect the pleasure of your presence and society on that solemnity? If you were here, you would be pleased with my prospect of usefulness, and you would be able to suggest some hints to our friends about the new chapel. Little things are apt to be neglected, and their neglect, though apparently trifling, would spoil the whole concern. We may well congratulate each other on the triumph the dissenters have obtained over an intolerant and oppressive spirit. They have imagined a vain thing: the Lord reigneth, let the people tremble. You know the great depression of spirits under which I have for some time labour-

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ed; may the Lord appear a present help in this time of trouble. The walls of Zion are to be built, it appears, in troublous times, for such they are to me; yet I would submissively commit my cause to God; he may ordain that the benefit of his Church, and the good of others, shall be promoted by the ills I endure. You know poor White, of Chester, has received the end of his faith—the salvation of his soul; I delivered the oration over his grave. Mr. Fletcher, of Blackburn, preached his funeral sermon. We are all dying creatures, hastening to the world of immortality. I think that lately the world has appeared to me in its true light—'*it passeth away.*' May we by every dispensation of Providence be rendered more meet for the inheritance of the saints in light: in due time may we be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven. Present my kind respects to Mrs. and Miss Wilson. I hope you will try to visit Liverpool by the time mentioned. Wishing much to see you, I remain, dear Sir,

"Affectionately your's,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

The day of ordination at length arriyed. The chapel in which Mr. Spencer preached being but small, that service, which, amongst dissenters of the congregational order, is remarkably solemn, was performed at the chapel in Byrom-street, Liverpool, which was handsomely granted to the people at Newington chapel for that special purpose. It was indeed an interesting day. The services were commenced by the Rev. Mr. Evans, of Stockport, who read suitable portions of scripture, and implored the

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Divine blessing upon the sacred engagements of the day. The Rev. Joseph Fletcher, M. A. of Blackburn, then delivered an admirable introductory discourse, and received from Mr. Spencer his confession of faith, together with answers to the questions usually, on such occasions, proposed to the minister to be ordained;* Mr. Spencer then kneeling down, surrounded by his fathers and brethren in the ministry, the Rev. John Cockin, of Halifax, offered up, with deep solemnity, the ordination prayer, accompanied by the imposition of hands. To this act of ordination succeeded a most impressive and affecting charge from the Rev. William Hordle, of Harwich, Mr. Spencer's former tutor and friend. The passage on which this excellent address was founded was Col. iv. 17. '*Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.*' The Rev. Mr. Roby, of Manchester, preached to the people of Mr. Spencer's charge, upon the duties which devolved on them in the relation that day publicly recognised from Gal. iv. 18, '*It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.*' The service was throughout most affecting and impressive; it was characterized by a peculiar solemnity, both in the feelings of the ministers and the people. The tender frame and delicate mind of Spencer was nearly overwhelmed by the awful considerations which then pressed upon him. Had the melancholy event which so rapidly succeeded this interesting service been

* For Mr. Spencer's confession of faith, &c. see Appendix, No. VI.

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at that time certainly announced, a seriousness more suitable to the occasion could hardly have been inspired; and indeed in Mr. Hordle's charge there were passages which in the sad sequel of this history appear most singularly appropriate—bordering even on the prophetic! One in particular deserves to be recorded:—

"You, my dear young brother, must die, and stand at the bar of God. Your ordination service may be only a prelude to your funeral service, for what is man? Man is but of yesterday, and his days are as a shadow. How often have we seen the sun go down while it is yet day! and while the church has been pleasing itself with the prospect of enjoying the pious fervent labours of an endeared minister for years, has an unexpected stroke separated them forever! Mourning survivors wondering have said, '*Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.*"

Too often such remarks as these are passed by unnoticed by the thoughtless—are merely considered as expletives to supply the want of other matter—or splendid furniture to decorate and give effect to the address. The anticipation, though founded in reason, warranted by scripture, and authorized by experience, is yet unaccompanied by any just assurance of the event it realizes; and its connexion with any special decree of God is concealed from mortals. But there are seasons when the lips of holy men seem to utter something more than those vague admonitions of death, which, from their frequent recurrence, or the uncertainty of their immediate accomplishment, lose their power to impress. And to

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those who admit the doctrine of divine influence upon the minds of men, and more especially upon such as are appointed to state and enforce the solemn doctrines of revelation to mankind, it can be no source of astonishment that God should sometimes direct the thoughts and expressions of his ministers into a current adapted to certain ends he has to answer, or particular events he intends shall shortly come to pass. With respect to the passage above cited, and its corresponding event, persons will form their own opinion. I cannot, however, but regard it as adding somewhat to the force and propriety of observations such as these, since here was another instance, in which the event anticipated by the speaker as *possible*, though at the time, perhaps, regarded by the hearers as highly *improbable*, was but too surely realized!

Mr. Spencer was now fully invested with that sacred office, which from his infancy he had desired; and he set himself diligently to the discharge of its momentous duties. That he felt its importance, was evident to all. His habitual conduct and conversation proved it. To his most intimate friends he freely expressed his anxieties respecting it, and earnestly did he implore an interest in the prayers of his people and his brethren in the ministry. In the assurance that he laboured amongst a praying people, he felt confidence: and no consideration is more adapted to relieve the mind of a faithful minister than this—while it pours unseen a thousand blessings on his head, it secures to his labours an affectionate attention, and an earnest desire rightly to appreciate and improve them. That which persons

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make the subject of earnest prayer, they will usually value; and it is hardly possible but that good must be uniformly the result, when both minister and people come from their closets, which have witnessed their fervent intercessions for each other, to the house of God. The apostle knew how to estimate the prayers even of the meanest Christians who enjoyed his labours. '*Brethren, pray for us.*'* —It is true that a people will for the most part take the cast of their religious character from that of their minister: if he be much alive to God, and zealous in the discharge of his ministry, he will communicate the sacred flame to all around him, and cause his people to reflect on every side the light his preaching and his example shed. But, on the other hand, are there no instances in which the reverse of this has been the case; the minister has been gradually disheartened and dispirited by a cold, supine, and worldly-minded people, who have continually thwarted him in his generous designs—counteracted his benevolent efforts—and quenched, by indifference and neglect, the ardour of his zeal. Instead of assisting him in his glorious work, they have hung like weights about his garments; and instead of acting as pioneers to prepare the paths of Christian benevolence for his willing feet to tread, they have clogged up the avenues with obstacles, and lined the way with insuperable difficulties. The

* See an admirable sermon upon this subject by the Rev. William Jay, of Bath, preached at the settlement of the Rev. Henry Forster Burder, A. M. at Hackney. Every pious minister, who knows its worth, must wish to see this excellent discourse in the hands of his people.

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spirit of the man has been broken by perpetual disappointment—vexation has gradually enervated his mind—and by slow and imperceptible degrees he has sunk into torpor and indifference—and the languor of the pastor has at length presented an unhappy counterpart to the supineness of the people. And even where neither the cause nor the consequences obtain to so alarming and fatal degree, still it is to be deplored that any approach to them should be suffered to exist. Here the stated attendants on a gospel ministry may often find a reason for that want of pleasure and improvement which sometimes they deplore, though most unjustly, at the preacher's cost. If prayer, special and fervent, for a blessing on their pastor's labours, has been neglected, the mystery is at once developed. For they have no right whatever to expect a blessing without prayer; and as they have no *right* to expect it without prayer, neither are they in a suitable frame to receive it; and thus it often happens, that where the prayerless soul departs empty away, the humble and earnest petitioner obtains a rich and suitable supply from the same table, and of the same food. It is *light bread* to the one, but it is life-giving and substantial provision to the other. '*Ask and ye shall receive.*'

On the first Sabbath in July Mr. Spencer dispensed, for the first time, the solemn ordinance of the Lord's supper. It was a time of love—a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The sweet impression of that happy day still remains, and its memory is yet dear to many. On the following Monday, at the social prayer meet-

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ing in the evening, in the bosom of his people, he again solemnly dedicated himself to God, and renewed his vows to consecrate all his powers to their service in the work of the ministry. Indeed, all he wrote, or said, or did, indicated the holy fervour of his soul. Tenderly alive to the sacred delicacy of his character, he was anxious to sustain it well, that the cause of Jesus might not suffer by any spots it might contract. Conscientiously awake to every call of duty which his most responsible station might involve, he was ready to obey them all—that the ministry might not be blamed!—The following letter is from his correspondence about this time, and may be numbered with the last he ever wrote. The expressions which I have copied, are mingled with others sacred to the privacy of friendship. They promise pleasures never realized—unfold prospects suddenly destroyed—and record arrangements he was *not* permitted to fulfil!

No. 42.

TO MR. HADDON.

Liverpool, July 8, 1811.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

* * * * *

"The ordination has, for the last fortnight, occupied almost the whole of my attention, and the impression, the solemn, the holy impression of which I trust I shall never forget. Yesterday, for the first time in my life, I administered the ordinance of the Lord's supper, and found it to be indeed '*a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.*' My du-

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ties are more and more *important* and pressing. Conversations upon religious experience with candidates for admission into our church, the baptism of children, and the calls of the sick and dying must necessarily engage much of my attention. But I can sincerely bless God, that amidst all the depression of mind I have suffered, my work has been my delight. The duties of the ministry have often refreshed, instead of oppressing me. The pleasure of the Lord has prospered in my hands. I love the service of the Head of the Church better than ever I did: when I am watering others, I find that Jehovah the Spirit waters my own soul too! Oh! is not this an encouraging token for good?——

"In great haste,

"I am ever your affectionate friend,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

In the mean time, Mr. Spencer was not confined to his own pulpit. He gave his brethren in the ministry tokens of his affectionate regard, by officiating for them in their respective places: and he also made several excursions into the country. Mr. Spencer did not encourage the idea, that as he had become by voluntary consecration the minister of a *particular* church, the church in *general* had now lost every claim upon his kind attention. Nor were the people amongst whom he laboured of a disposition so selfish and narrow, as to wish to confine his exertions exclusively to the spot they occupied. That the first and constant regards of a pastor are due to the people of his charge, none can dispute; but with the work of the pastor, to a certain extent, may

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with the greatest propriety be added that of an evangelist. There are surrounding districts that will often cry to him for help, which he is bound to render—there are destitute societies to whom he must minister consolation and instruction, in token of his brotherly love—and there are interchanges of friendship, which promote union, which relieve the mind, and which will ever be found beneficial to the churches by whom they are encouraged. Intercourse with society informs the judgment—corrects the views, and expands the mind. Long labour in one appointed sphere, however important and delightful the duties it involves, and especially where all the powers of the mind are ever on the stretch, must produce at length weariness, sameness, monotony. A visit to another scene—intercourse with other connexions—refreshes and revives the wasted spirits and the weary frame. And the church, however they may value their pastor's ministry and regret his absence, will not eventually be losers by the temporary privation they may suffer.

But we must, however reluctant, pass on to the closing scenes of Mr. Spencer's life. As his death was sudden, I have none of those sayings or sentiments to record which occupy the last pages of most biographical sketches of departed saints; and yet his friends remember, with peculiar pleasure, in what a holy frame of mind he appeared to be during the whole of the week previous to his removal. If I should be more minute than may be deemed absolutely necessary in what remains of these imperfect memoirs of this lovely youth, I trust that I shall be forgiven. I write for friendship; and to his friends

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it must afford peculiar gratification to follow him through all the scenes he visited, and mark the slightest movements of his mind during the last week of his residence on this earth.

On Sabbath day, July 28, being the day appointed for a collection for the new chapel, Mr. Spencer preached a most excellent sermon in the morning from Ezra ix. 8. '*And now for a little space grace has been shewed from the Lord our God to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.*' In the evening his text was Acts xiii. 26, '*To you is the word of this salvation sent.*' On that day he exerted himself greatly, and complained much of a pain at his heart, but did not seem at night particularly fatigued. The following day he spent chiefly in conversation with his friends respecting the state of the church, and some candidates for communion who were to be visited and received during that week—he dined at the house of a friend—in the afternoon visited the sick room of one of his members—and in the evening attended the prayer meeting at the chapel, when he recapitulated the outline of a sermon which had been preached on the Wednesday evening preceding, by the Rev. Mr. Davies, of London. His memory was remarkably retentive, and he gave in that exercise a proof of its powers, which astonished all that heard him. That evening he slept in Liverpool, and early on Tuesday morning he went with a friend to Prescot and laid the foundation stone of a new chapel there, and delivered an address adapted to the occasion, in the presence of a large assembly.

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From the ground he retired to the house of a gentleman in Prescot, whose child he then baptized, and so proceeded immediately to St. Helen's, a town about four miles distant, where he preached in the evening. On Wednesday afternoon he returned much fatigued to Liverpool, but preached in the evening with great animation, from a text selected for him, by one of the young persons of his church; Rev. xi. 2, '*Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*' The Rev. Mr. Wray, the missionary at Demerara, was then in Liverpool, and was at the chapel. A friend who saw Mr. Spencer in the vestry after service, observed him to be much exhausted, and heard him say, for the first time, "Oh! I did not feel comfortable in seeing a brother minister in the congregation this evening." Usually he did not fear the face of man. On Thursday, about noon, one of his deacons called upon him at his residence, and he was occupied the whole day with him in visiting those who were to be received into the church; his conversations, with the respective candidates, were truly admirable and appropriate, and such as will remain in the grateful memory of those who had the happiness to enjoy them. On Friday he was occupied until the afternoon in writing letters to his friends. I am able to present the reader with extracts from two of them.

August 2, 1811.

"I find growing pleasure in my ministerial employment; this evening I have to admit eight new members to church communion; indeed when I ac-

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cepted this situation, I never conceived that I should have half the engagements or duties to attend to, which I now find must be accomplished, if I would merit the character of an active, useful minister of religion. I think my recent afflictions, and the solemn duties which now devolve upon me, have in a considerable degree chastened my character, and imparted, perhaps, a seriousness to my general deportment, which may prove highly advantageous to me in future life. How long this will *last* I cannot tell, but I think affliction adds a weight to a character nothing else does, and especially to young people and young ministers. I have lately been preaching in the villages round Liverpool.—Oh! let us aim to glorify God, and then trust all our concerns in his hands, that so at the last we may be accepted of him."

In another, to his father, he says:

"I was much hurt at the account of my mother's* illness; I hope no distressing circumstances have arisen, and by this time, perhaps, I may indulge the idea that you are better yourself. Oh! how necessary that we should all seek a better country, since here there is so much change, affliction, and wo. May every trial be sanctified to us all, and we be meetened for the inheritance of the saints in light."

Having concluded his earthly correspondence with his distant friends, forever,† he left his residence

* His step-mother.

† His correspondence with his beloved and honoured parent has been recently renewed. Spencer's father sleeps the sleep of death; his body rests in his bed, but his spirit walks in

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and resumed his pastoral visits amongst his people, and the candidates who were to be that evening received. At the church meeting he was particularly lively; with holy joy he welcomed the new members into the communion of the church, and as he gave to each the right hand of fellowship, he addressed a short but most affectionate and solemn exhortation, admirably adapted to their respective ages, stations, and feelings.* Indeed, all the duties of the pastor's

its uprightness. He was a venerable saint. Few have felt the pressure of trials such as his, and few have displayed a spirit more uncomplaining and resigned. He walked with God. Repeatedly before his departure he assured his family that he was going to glory. And on the 25th of December, 1812, his happy spirit was dismissed to the enjoyment of its rest.

* At the church-meeting, with great emphasis, he gave out the following hymn, from Kelly's collection:

RECEIVING A MEMBER.

"COME in thou blessed of the Lord,
Enter in Jesus' precious name:
We welcome thee with one accord,
And trust the Saviour does the same.

Thy name, 'tis hop'd, already stands,
Mark'd in the book of life above;
And now to thine we join our hands,
In token of fraternal love.

Those joys which earth cannot afford,
We'll seek in fellowship to prove;
Join'd in one spirit to our Lord,
Together bound by mutual love.

And while we pass this vale of tears,
We'll make our joys and sorrows known;

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office were conducted by him with a propriety and an ease, which years of experience are frequently unable to supply. With the unaffected simplicity of youth, he tempered the dignity of age—he seemed to be at once at home in the duties of his new and important station—never embarrassed or confused; he appeared to have an intuitive perception of what belonged to his character and office, in every case as it arose; and following the inward suggestion, he acquitted himself well, and discharged with undeviating consistency the high responsibilities he bore.

After the meeting, Mr. Spencer spent the evening in serious conversation with a few friends; leading with great fervour the devotions of the family, and closing a day of sacred duties, with uncommon calmness and placidity of mind.

The following morning, Saturday, he spent in his study, in preparations for the pulpit. In the course of the day he wrote to a young lady, one of the number received, the preceding evening, into his church—at the close of the note he said,—

"I suppose you anticipate to-morrow with feelings of solemnity, you will appear in a new light to the church of Christ, and the spectators of our holy solemnities; we shall share to-morrow Zion's chief feast. May the blessing of the God of ordinances

We'll share each other's hopes and fears,
And count another's care our own.

Once more our welcome we repeat;
Receive assurance of our love;
Oh! may we all together meet
Around the throne of God above."

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be upon us all. Wishing you the enjoyment of perfect health, and much communion with your best Friend,

"I remain, &c.

"THOMAS SPENCER."

After dinner on the Saturday, the conversation turned upon a passage in Ezekiel—"*I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;*" from which Mr. Spencer took occasion to speak much at large upon the nature and stability of the covenant of grace. In the evening he met the Rev. Messrs. Charrier, Lister, and Wray, the missionary, together with Mr. Laird, of Greenock, and others, at the house of a friend. It was a pleasant interview, and in reflection has afforded to the persons who composed that social party the sincerest pleasure. To his most intimate friends, it is a source of much satisfaction, that his pastoral engagements that week were such as every day to bring him into their society—so that they had constant intercourse with their departed friend—and passing with him from house to house can look back and say, '*Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us by the way, and opened unto us the scriptures.*'——Like the companion of Elijah, they walked with him in close connexion from spot to spot, charmed and edified with the holy strain of his discourse, and the rising lustre of his character; but all unconscious, that whilst they were thus conversing with him upon earth, *the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof* were preparing to conduct him triumphantly to heaven.

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But the scene closes rapidly upon us. On the last Sabbath of his life, August 4th, he rose with unusual health and spirits. The family with whom he resided always beheld him with peculiar interest on the morning of the Sabbath, such an air of angelic mildness and composure sat upon his countenance—and so deeply did he seem absorbed in the contemplation of the sacred duties of the day. That morning he preached from Jer. xxxi. 3—'*I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.*' The way of his discussing the subject was simple and interesting: I have drawn thee—to the cross—to the throne—to the church—were the leading ideas in the discourse. It was particularly adapted to the occasion, so many new members being that day added to the church. He afterwards administered the Lord's supper in a most solemn and affecting manner. Such as witnessed the scene—and the number of spectators was about three hundred—bear an unanimous testimony to the deep solemnity by which it was characterized. His appeals to the conscience were so close and overwhelming—his invitations to the faint and weary were so pressing and tender—his countenance—his voice—his whole manner were so expressive of holy fervour, that every eye was fixed—every heart seemed moved. How long the impression will remain I cannot tell; but the emotions enkindled by the transactions of that day are yet lively in the hearts of many—and numbers love to converse upon it, as one of those rare and highly favoured seasons, in which the distance between earth and heaven seems annihilated—and so

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transporting is the joy, that *whether in the body or out of the body*, the happy Christian can scarcely tell! To a friend, who afterwards hinted that he appeared to be very happy in prayer at the Lord's supper, he replied—"O yes; I thought I could have prayed, and prayed, and mounted up to heaven!" At the close of that memorable service—one, the ardour of whose feelings age had checked, observed, that "Mr. Spencer seemed that morning twenty years older in experience than he really was." At dinner he mentioned to the family, that he had received that morning a letter from a friend in London who had been formerly reluctant to his settlement in Liverpool, as though it were not the sphere designed by Providence for him. He then expressed the full conviction of his own mind, that he was precisely where he ought to be—under such an impression, he observed, that he was perfectly satisfied and happy; and added, "if it had not been the will of God, I should never have settled here."

In the evening, in the midst of a throng, such as is rarely witnessed, and from which hundreds departed unable to gain access, he preached from Luke x. 42, '*One thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.*' His chief object in this sermon was to shew, that communion with the Saviour is the one thing needful. Throughout the whole discourse, it seemed as if all the powers of his mind, all the ardour of his soul were infused into his composition, and his delivery. In the application, he was uncommonly urgent with the young—earnestly exhorting them to an immediate decision on the side of Christ—

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representing to them the folly and the danger of deferring the important concerns of salvation and eternity to an uncertain futurity—and assuring them, that *very soon* he should meet them at the bar of God, and that there he should be a swift witness against them. By those who are best able to decide, it was observed, that his last sermon was perhaps the most adapted for usefulness of any he had preached—and this observation, which was made immediately after its delivery, has been since most amply confirmed, in instances perpetually presenting themselves, in which that sermon proved instrumental in effecting the happiest impressions, many of which have issued in a saving change.

After the labours of the day he went to the house of a friend to supper; he did not appear to be unusually fatigued. With great fervour he led the devotions of the family. He read a portion of scripture, and gave out the 165th hymn of the 2d book. He was remarkably copious and earnest in prayer—commending especially to God—the family—the church—the members who had recently joined—the missionary, (who was present) and every object to which his holy and benevolent mind recurred. At supper the conversation was pure and spiritual—such as the book of remembrance in heaven preserves—such as will not easily be forgotten upon earth. The subject was sudden death. The countenance of Spencer, always animated, was lighted up with holy joy as he discoursed upon the glory of departed saints—he seemed to realize the scenes he attempted to describe, whilst he expressed his own conceptions of the transport and surprise in

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which the disembodied spirit will be lost, when first admitted to the immediate presence of God. He spoke much upon the blessedness of putting off the garments of mortality in a moment, and being caught up unexpectedly and instantaneously to heaven! He seemed to lose the memory of the day's fatigue in the interesting theme, and frequently observed, that he had not for a long time felt himself so free from weariness. A little after eleven, he parted with his friends forever. Never did they discover more of the warmth of his friendship, or the ardour of his piety, than in this last, happy interview. His countenance seemed eradiated with smiles of ineffable benignity—his whole deportment indicated a mind abstracted from the world, except so far as bound to it by the benevolent desire of doing good, and wholly devoted to communion and fellowship with God. So mature indeed did his character appear—so ripe did he seem for glory, that some of his friends could not but entertain a presentiment of his early removal. Though not then elevated to a higher sphere, he still appeared mysteriously weaned from earth. His loins were girt, and his lamp burning with unusual brightness, as though he expected the coming of his Lord. In its anticipations of future glory, his happy spirit seemed to try its pinions, preparatory to the glorious flight it was about to take.

On Monday morning, August the 5th, the last day that dawned for *him*, he rose rather later than usual; his mind was too active for his body: the exhausted frame required rest. After breakfast, he received a visit from a young lady, one of the members lately

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admitted into the church. He entered the room with a cheerful smile; and the family having retired after some general conversation, he said, "Well, M———, you are now a member of a Christian church; yesterday you solemnly professed your faith in Christ, while the attention of many of our fellow creatures was fixed on you; God also beheld your profession—all heaven and hell witnessed the solemnity." On her expressing some fears lest she should be unable to act consistently with the profession she had made, he replied, "Live near to Christ—be much in communion with your own heart—be very frequent in addresses at a throne of grace, and there is no fear of you." Then referring to the long and agonizing distress which he had suffered through the alarming indisposition of his dearest connexions, and which seemed now happily removing, he said, "This severe affliction has not been sent, but for reasons the wisest and the best; from it I have learned many lessons, and have enjoyed much of the presence of God under it. O may my heart be filled with gratitude to Him who is the author of all our mercies." He frequently bathed; he found it beneficial to his health. He purposed doing so that day, and had expressed his intention in the morning. He had just repeated the first verse of Cowper's admirable hymn,—

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm,"

when one of the family came into the room, and said, that if he intended bathing, it was time that

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he should go, as it would very soon be high water. He assented; but whilst a towel was being procured for him, he turned to his young friend, and said, "I can't tell how it is, but I don't feel so much inclined to go, to-day, as usual." She asked if it was thought good for his health—he answered "Yes, it will brace my nerves after the exertion of yesterday." And, indeed, he had an immediate object in view, for he had folded his paper, and prepared his pen, in order to compose a sermon to be preached in the course of the ensuing week, on behalf of the Religious Tract Society, in London; and he was anxious that, by bathing, his mind might be invigorated for study, as he had frequently observed it to have that pleasing influence. Mr. Spencer and his friend left the house together, when turning towards the water, he said, "I must go this way." They parted. His friend sought again the bosom of her family—he went the way whence he never returned!

The following pages of this history must be filled with weeping, and lamentation, and wo. They must detail as sad a catastrophe as ever humanity or religion mourned. With cheerfulness Mr. Spencer took the path which leads across the fields towards the Herculaneum potteries, a little above which it was his design to bathe. The eye of his friend, beneath whose roof he dwelt, followed him till distance hid him from his sight. Arrived at the spot which he had selected, not so much from a knowledge of the ground, as from the circumstance of its retirement, he asked a gentleman, who had been bathing, and who then was dressing, "if that was a good place to bathe at?"—he answered that

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it was, but that it was rather stony near the side, but better when further in. Mr. Spencer replied, "I rather think that it is a good place myself, and I don't like to bathe near the pottery, there are so many people." Mr. S. then asked again, "Is the tide nigh up?" to which he was answered, "About half past eleven." "Oh! dear," said Mr. Spencer, "it is near twelve."—As this conversation passed, Mr. Spencer was undressing, and, at intervals, humming a tune. When undressed, he walked towards the water, and spoke to a workman belonging to the pottery, of the name of Potter, who also was bathing, and who directed him which way to come into the water. While walking in, Mr. Spencer observed, that it was very cold—to which Potter replied, "You will not find it so cold when in." Potter then plunged into the water about breast high, and when he next saw Mr. Spencer, he was swimming within his depth, but soon afterwards the tide swept him round an abrupt projecting rock, where the water was from six to seven feet. Potter himself, who is an expert swimmer, soon found the current driving him round the same rock; but he immediately, with difficulty, swam to the shore, when he looked about for Mr. Spencer, and, not seeing him, was much alarmed. At length, after the lapse of a minute or two, he saw the top of his head floating above the surface of the water. Potter could not tell whether he was amusing himself or drowning. He however cried out to him; but receiving no answer, plunged in again, and swam to the rock, in order to render him assistance—but found it impossible—Mr. Spencer having sunk in seven feet water, and the currents

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being remarkably strong. Potter, with considerable trouble, and not till some time had elapsed, got up the side of the rock, and communicated the intelligence to Mr. Smith, of the potteries, who immediately ordered out two boats, which were directly manned and brought to the spot, when every exertion was made to find the body.

I have frequently examined the place; indeed, I take a mournful pleasure in visiting the scene; and I have sought the opinion of medical gentlemen respecting the *immediate* cause of Mr. Spencer's death. The spot is most unfavourable for safe and pleasant bathing. Whoever sees it at low water, is astonished that any person, acquainted with the nature of the shore, should venture there. There is a ridge of sharp and slippery rock, running in a curved direction, for many yards, into the water, and terminating abruptly; on either side of this most rugged ridge the fall is instantaneous, and from one to two feet. It is highly probable, then, that Mr. S. swimming, as was described, along by the shore, might bring himself up immediately on the edge of this treacherous rock, which being slippery, deceived him, and by suddenly precipitating him into deeper water, caused a spasmodick fear—a combination of instantaneous terror and spasm,—which directly suspended the functions of life, and he sunk, without further agitation or conflict, in the arms of death.

> "So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
> And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
> And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
> Flames in the forehead of the morning sky;
> So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,

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Through the dear might of him that walk'd the waves;
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops and sweet societies,
That sing, and, singing in their glory, move,
And wipe the tears forever from his eyes."

In the meanwhile, the gentleman whom Mr. Spencer first addressed, returned, and, discovering the sad event, apprized them that it was Mr. Spencer, the minister, who was lost. Potter renewed his exertions to find the body, assisted by the people in the boats, in which they at length succeeded, after it had been under water about fifty minutes. By this time the melancholy tidings had spread abroad; and happily some gentlemen of the faculty being in the neighbourhood, and hearing of the event, hastened immediately to the spot, so that, ere the finding of the body, every thing was in readiness for instantly commencing the resuscitating process.

When drawn from the water, the body exhibited no symptoms of violence or struggle in the act of dying—the countenance was placid and serene—its features were perfectly undisturbed, and so lovely was its expression in death, that one of the medical attendants observed,—a painter could not desire a finer object!

On the arrival of the body on the beach, the water was easily expelled, and being then wrapped up in flannel, it was immediately conveyed to the house of Mr. Smith, where, by the kind exertions of the fam-

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ily, every necessary arrangement had been made for its reception.

The apparatus having arrived from Liverpool, and three medical gentlemen being present to receive the body, the usual methods adopted in cases of suspended animation were instantly pursued. They were soon joined by three other gentlemen of the faculty, who rendered every possible assistance; every expedient was, in the course of the afternoon, resorted to—but alas in vain! and at five o'clock, in the opinion of all present, there remained not the faintest hope of restoring animation—the spark of life was totally extinguished.

Thus, in one sad moment, was lost to society and to the church of Christ, one of the loveliest of men—one of the most eloquent of ministers: upon whose lips, only the preceding day, hundreds had hung with delight, and the long continued and extended exertion of whose powers, in a larger sanctuary, the foundation of which he had but recently laid, thousands anticipated with eager desire! To tell how many hearts have bled, beneath this awful visitation, would require a fortitude which I do not possess—and constitute a volume, not surpassed, in the anguish which it would describe, by any similar catastrophe in the records of human wo. The tidings spread through the populous town of Liverpool, with a rapidity, such as, in cases of public calamity, is usually inspired. They circulated through all ranks, and excited one common feeling of regret in every bosom. They reached the exchange, and produced an extraordinary impression there; those who knew him, mourned the loss of one they loved—and those

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who knew him not, felt the agitation of that sudden shock, which the premature removal of such men occasions—they participated in the general sympathy—and deplored the loss of Spencer, as an event demanding general regret! Numbers hastened to the spot. Some incredulous, to obtain the sad assurance of the truth—and others to enjoy the mournful satisfaction of beholding that countenance in death, on which they had often gazed with transport, when kindled into radiance by the ardour of the soul that lately animated it. All was confusion and distress. Such a day has been seldom seen in Liverpool: a day of such dreadful gloom—such universal grief. From the countenance of every one, to whom the tidings came, one might have imagined he had lost a friend;—whilst many, to whom by intimate acquaintance he had become peculiarly endeared—petrified at first with mingled horror and surprise, when recollection and feeling returned, yielded, for awhile, to the influence of the deepest sorrow.

The estimation in which Mr. Spencer was held in Liverpool was most decidedly marked after his decease. The public prints severally bore testimony to his worth, and pronounced a warm, but just eulogium on his extraordinary merits: the introduction of some extracts will not be unsuitable here.

"Mr. Spencer was about twenty years of age; in his person and countenance eminently prepossessing; and of manners most amiable, conciliating, and engaging. As a preacher, his talents were held in a degree of estimation, and possessed an extent of influence, which have seldom been equalled in the annals of pulpit eloquence. His discourses were

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rather persuasive and hortatory, than argumentative or disquisitive: they were addressed more to the imagination and affections, than to the judgment; and this, apparently, not so much from any deficiency of talent, as from a firm persuasion, that, in matters of religion, the avenues to the understanding are chiefly to be sought in the heart. His sermons, thus constituted, were adorned with a felicity of expression, and delivered in an unremitted fluency of language, altogether surprising in extemporaneous discourses. These essenital qualities of eloquence were assisted by an uncommonly distinct articulation, a tone of voice singularly melodious, and great gracefulness of action. Thus gifted by nature, and improved by cultivation, it is not surprising that he possessed the power of attaching an audience, in a manner that will never be forgotten by those who attended his ministry. Perhaps it scarcely ever before fell to the lot of any individual, at so early an age, to have diffused religious impression through so extensive a circle of hearers; and those who looked forward to the maturity of his powers, with the hope naturally inspired by his early excellence, will regard his loss as a public misfortune."

"The deceased was about twenty years of age, a youth of amiable and engaging manners; and his pulpit talents were so far above his years, as to obtain for him a large share of public admiration and popularity. His premature death has most deeply affected the feelings of his numerous friends, who looked forward to the maturity of his early powers, with the highest hope of obtaining in him a most valuable accession to the dissenting ministry."

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But at the solemnities of interment, the strongest demonstration of public feeling was afforded. The concourse of people assembled to witness or assist in the last sad token of respect to his remains was never, perhaps, equalled in Liverpool. Religion, Humanity, Friendship, and Genius, mingled their tears at his grave. The funeral took place on Tuesday, the 13th August, 1811: the procession moved from the Park about eleven in the morning, in the following order:—

The Gentlemen of the Faculty;
Ministers, four abreast;

The Body,

The Pall supported by ten Ministers, five on each side;
The Mourners;
Friends of the deceased,
To the number of One Hundred and Thirty,
With white hat-bands and gloves,
Six abreast.

All the streets through which the procession passed were crowded to excess, as also were the windows and balconies of the houses. But the greatest decorum was observed—and a seriousness, according with the solemn occasion, was manifested by all. The corpse was borne into the chapel, late the scene of Mr. Spencer's labours, and the Rev. Mr. Charrier, of Bethesda chapel, read part of the 15th chapter of the 1st of Corinthians, and the 4th and 5th of the 1st of Thessalonians, and offered a most solemn prayer. At the grave an eloquent and impressive oration was delivered by the Rev. Joseph Fletcher, A. M. of Blackburn. The mournful service was concluded

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by a prayer from the Rev. Mr. Lister, of Lime street chapel.

"The whole scene," a Liverpool journal observes, "was affecting—it could not be otherwise. Every idea which could be associated with the spectacle was such as to excite the deepest sympathy. The flower of youth, scarcely opened, snatched from the stem of life by a sudden and rude attack of mortality: a minister, who lately fixed the attention of crowded audiences by the power of his eloquence, conveyed to the house of silence and darkness; the fairest prospects of honour and usefulness in life blasted; the warm hopes of his friends wrecked in a moment; and the deep, the dreadful wound inflicted in the feelings of relatives, and the dearest connexions. Such, however, are the appointments of a supreme governing Intelligence, to which human choice and wishes must bow with reverence, supported by the general principle of the justice, wisdom, and benevolence, which direct the affairs of men. Similar afflictions are of frequent occurrence in private life, though they there pass unnoticed. Public characters excite attention both in their zenith and fall; and so far as society is bereft of virtue, useful talents, and active zeal, their death is a public calamity."

On the following Sunday evening, a funeral sermon was preached at Newington Chapel, by the Rev. William Roby, of Manchester, from Heb. xiii. 7, 8, '*Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.*' This sermon, so admirably adapted to sooth

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the disconsolate congregation to whom it was addressed, has been presented to them, by its respected author, from the press.

But not in Liverpool alone was the shock of Mr. Spencer's death felt—or the loss occasioned by his sudden removal deplored. Scarcely was there a district in Britain to which the melancholy tidings did not reach. The universal esteem in which the beloved youth was held, was manifested by the numerous sermons which were preached throughout the country, to embalm his memory, and to improve his death. In London several were delivered,—many singularly eloquent and appropriate; several have issued from the press, and have been noticed in the preceding pages. The sympathy awakened for the mourning church, was as general as the regret occasioned by their pastor's death. Of Spencer it may be truly said, '*devout men carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him,*' whilst the situation of his bereaved people, excited in every bosom compassion and grief, '*for they were left as sheep without a shepherd.*'

It now remains that I present the reader with a general sketch of Mr. Spencer's character. The opportunity afforded in such works as these, of illustrating great and important principles, in their influence upon human conduct, ought to be seized with avidity, and improved with care. In this respect Biography is particularly valuable, and possesses a considerable advantage over general history. The subjects and characters of general history are numerous, complicated, and often but indistinctly seen—here the object is single. The mind

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dwells, without diversion or distraction, on the character presented to its contemplation. Being relieved from the toil which variety occasions, it has leisure to dwell upon its several features, and to observe their mutual influence or associated harmony. The scenes and events of an individual's life, when faithfully and judiciously recorded, are admirably adapted to develope the formation of character—whilst lessons of wisdom, and principles of action are better understood and more correctly appreciated, when drawn out in the scenes of actual life, than they possibly can be, when simply, and abstractedly delivered. And, moreover, the peculiar sentiments which the delineation of certain characters is especially calculated to illustrate, are better remembered, when associated with names, with places, and with deeds; whilst they make a far deeper impression upon the heart, from the circumstance that their nature and tendency are at once demonstrated, by the actual consequences to which, in these individual cases, they have led. In the pages of the biographer, the man lives again for us. "Being dead he yet speaketh." We are put in possession, in an hour or two, of knowledge, which it cost him years of anxious labour to acquire. We obtain confidence—we awake to an honourable ambition—we feel the animating influence of hope, whilst we mark the excellencies of his character, and the successful labours of his life. Self-examination is induced, by a contemplation of his failings —and caution, by the disclosure of his errors. Humility is promoted, by observing with how much imperfection the noblest and the loveliest qualities

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in man are unhappily combined—and the provision which the gospel makes for our final acceptance with God, derives importance and value from the assurance, which every faithful piece of biography must tend to establish,—that the purest character —the fairest life, must sink before the high standard and demands of Jehovah's perfect law.

In calling the attention of my readers to views of Mr. Spencer's character, I am aware that the objection may be started—that in one so young, a character could hardly be formed at all. The objection is founded in reason. But although his character had not obtained its maturity—or assumed those fixed and established habits, with which years and experience would have invested it—still it had arrived at such a stage of its progress, as already to present strong lines, and obvious features. Some, so deeply marked as to be recognised by all who knew him—and others, upon the infancy of which, the eyes of his most intimate associates dwelt, with unspeakable delight. And, young as it was, the character of Spencer at the age of *twenty*, was such, as even an *aged* Christian might not blush to own. I have often gazed, with pleasure, on the animating picture which my fancy drew, when it has added years of experience and of culture, to what *was* the character of Spencer at his death, and imaged to itself what, after the lapse of time, that character might possibly have been; and when recalled from the delightful reverie, I have mourned that the lovely object existed only in my fancy. But we do wrong to mourn. His removal from our world was the dictate alike of Infinite Wisdom and Love.

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And the time appointed for his departure was the best. His character had attained that degree of maturity, for which God had destined it, on earth—he had performed the service which he was called to accomplish in the church. His sun rose with almost unexampled rapidity to its meridian—his work was completed with prodigious speed—yet, having reached his appointed elevation, and performed his allotted labour—*that* was the suitable period for his removal. He had witnessed as much impression and effect, in his short ministry, as many an aged pastor would rejoice to observe, after years of incessant toil. Can his death be considered, then, as premature? If one labourer accomplishes his share of the day's exertion an hour or two earlier than his companions, may he not be permitted to retire to his rest before them?—Spencer has finished his course—he rests from his labours—and his works do follow him.

AS A MAN,

He was GENEROUS—FRANK—INDEPENDENT,—UNAFFECTED—UNSUSPECTING—and SINCERE.——*Generous;* his heart, his hand, and his purse, were ever at the service of the needy, and cheerfully devoted to the cause of Christ. An instance of his generosity has been recorded in the preceding narrative—that of his usually adding to the collection, when he preached for the benefit of a poor church that had an aged minister. One of the last acts of his life was an act of benevolence; he had no money about him, at the time of his death, for he had emptied his pockets to a poor person, previous to his leaving the house on the morning of that awful day. Had

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he lived to be the possessor of a house, and the head of a family, from *him* the apostolic injunction, '*given to hospitality*,' would have met with a spontaneous acquiescence. Unhappily, this qualification of a Christian bishop, some of our worthy pastors have it not in their power to display!——*Frank*; he was open and ingenuous; his sentiments were ever undisguised; his language spoke correctly what he thought and felt; and his countenance was an index to his mind. Truly was it said of him, that he carried his heart in a crystal vase, so that all could see it. His opinions he never attempted to conceal; his attachments and his dislikes were, with equal freedom and sincerity, declared. The prudent will say, it displayed but little knowledge of mankind; true: he was ignorant, and therefore unsuspecting, and often unguarded. He did not calculate upon treachery, under the garb of friendship—or censorious observation, in the social circle. Alas! that experience should only tend to make a man suspicious, and intercourse with society render him sceptical in his opinions of his fellow men! *Independent*; perhaps, too much so, for his station as a minister of the gospel, and especially as the pastor of a church. He had his partialities and predilections,—every man must have them—he cannot be brought, by any discipline, to love that which is totally uncongenial to his taste and habits, however he may be inclined to cherish and testify a deference and respect. But these predilections, Spencer was ever ready to declare; and such was his independent spirit, that no consideration of interest could induce him to utter a compliment or pay an atten-

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tion which was foreign from his purpose, or repugnant to his feelings. To *all*, he cheerfully paid the regard which the obligations of his station claimed; but only with such as his heart and feelings approved, did he share the social intercourse, or the endearments of friendship. And, surely, a man in public life, whilst he pays to all around him such attentions as the functions of his office involve, has a right to select the individuals with whom he will share the social hour, or to whom he may commit the more sacred and retired feelings of his heart. Yet, even here, prudence would suggest certain cautions, particularly adapted to the very delicate circumstances in which the pastor of a church is placed.——*Unaffected;* every thing like affectation and display, he abhorred—every thing feminine and soft in manners, he excessively disliked. His own were the reverse; they were characterized by impetuosity and boldness—a decision and a promptitude marked every thing he did. There was often a carelessness about his dress, arising from that indifference to shew and decoration, which, in every thing, he displayed. So neglectful was he of his appearance, that he did not wear a watch, till urged repeatedly by the want of it, he at length purchased one. He observed to a friend a circumstance connected with the purchase of this watch, not perhaps unworthy of insertion. He asked the man of whom he bought the watch, if what he demanded was his lowest price? "Yes, Sir," said the man; "I heard you preach upon seeing Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, and I will not over-

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charge *you.*" He loved to preach in a gown; it tended, he said, to conceal his youth, and give weight to his sermon,—otherwise he was indifferent about it. How far this may be considered as sufficient reason for wearing a gown, I cannot determine; certainly, there are matters of higher moment than this; and it is surely cause of regret, that great and good men should ever grow warm, and say or do strong things, upon a subject, confessedly so inferior in importance.—*Unsuspecting*—he formed an estimate of every individual's bosom by the ingenuousness of his own; no wonder then, if sometimes he should have erred, and the error prove a source of poignant anguish and unavailing regret. He who has never seen a storm, may, all unconscious of his danger, trust the syren sea; but he who has endured the tempest will mark well the signs of the sky, ere he tempt the treacherous element that has once deceived.—*Sincere;* to have his hand, was to possess his heart; and where he could not give the latter, he never presented the former. Whatever he said, he uttered from conviction; and on every assurance, the firmest reliance might be placed.

AS A FRIEND,

He was WARM—DISINTERESTED—and AFFECTIONATE. The *fervour* of his friendship is sufficiently displayed in the correspondence preserved in the preceding pages. His whole soul seems infused into his paper; and, if such were his letters, happy must they esteem themselves who were favoured with his private walks and most retired intercourse.

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"His friendship, I can truly say," observes his most intimate companion, "has given me one of the most lively views that I ever enjoyed of union and communion with the spirits of *just* men made *perfect*.—I shall not easily forget the impression of awe upon my mind while hearing him preach at White's Row, from these words:—'*Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away at a stroke, then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.*' I thought, I surely can never more use the freedom of friendship with *him*. But at his descent from the pulpit, his sparkling eye, friendly squeeze, and affectionate pressure of my arm to his side as we returned, convinced me that he was still the humble, interesting youth with whom I had taken sweet counsel, and walked to that house of God." Nor was he guided in the formation of his friendships by a principle of *interest*. This indeed governs the world in their associations:—

"And what is friendship but a name,
A charm that lulls to sleep,
A shade that follows wealth or fame,
But leaves the wretch to weep."

But he sought not high connexions—exalted friendships—or splendid alliances—he shrunk from grandeur, pomp, and parade—he felt uneasy when surrounded by any thing like splendour—he preferred the calm mediocrity of life, as furnishing, for the most part, excellence in character, and comfort in intercourse!——Of his *affection*, it were in vain to speak—no language can describe all the tenderness of his affectionate heart—affection

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the purest and most refined. The following is the testimony of one who deeply participated in it:—

"And surely I may experimentally say, that a more affectionate spirit than that of Spencer never animated a fallen son of Adam. When we first met he unbosomed himself, freely claimed my friendship, with an affection that overpowered me, and entreated the *fidelity* of friendship, charging me to watch him narrowly, and point out every imperfection. If ever the delightful scene recorded 1 Samuel xviii. 1, was reiterated, (and doubtless it often has been) it was when Spencer *had made an end of speaking*. But proofs of the affection of Spencer's heart are totally unnecessary. I shall mention one only. Soon after we became acquainted, he used to call generally on a Saturday evening—'Well, where shall you be to-morrow? with Mr. Foster, I suppose.' 'Why, I suppose so too, unless you draw me away.' 'I am sure I should be sorry to draw you away, if you do not see it right: I am sure you must be a loser by hearing me instead of Mr. Foster; yet if you could see it right, I should be very glad.' When he preached in the country, he used, he said, to look round for a retired corner for me, such as I should like, if there. At Hoxton, he pointed out a seat for me, and when he rose from prayer, used to see if I filled it."

AS A STUDENT

He was DILIGENT—CONSCIENTIOUS—and SUCCESSFUL.—*Diligent;* to a habit of study he had been inured almost from his infancy—the elements of knowledge he obtained under peculiar difficulty—and had

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he not been inspired by an ardent love of that sacred work, for the honourable discharge of which, he deemed the acquisition of human learning necessary, his name would probably never have been known beyond the circles of his native town. But he longed for the acquisition of knowledge, not from a principle of self-gratification, or the love of fame, but as an auxiliary to his great design. Impelled by such a powerful principle, he sought for it with unceasing avidity—and laboured in its pursuit with unconquerable ardour. But it was his lot to meet with a continued chain of obstacles to the free and ample gratification of his taste for learning. In his childhood, the circumstances of his family were inauspicious, and he was compelled, at a period when the powers of his mind were unfolding, to devote those hours to manual labour, which he would have gladly consecrated to books. The year he spent at Harwich was the only year of uninterrupted study he enjoyed; for very soon after his entrance into Hoxton Academy he began to preach—and then, his popularity formed a most serious and insurmountable barrier—whilst, after his settlement in the ministry, the important duties of his new and extensive sphere of action forbad the indulgence of any pursuits in private, but such as bore immediately upon his *public* work.

These circumstances, however, taught him the value of retirement, and instructed him in the happy art of husbanding his time. This art he cultivated with conscientious care—and whoever contemplates the numerous papers he has left behind, and compares them with the public engagements

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he performed, must be sensibly impressed with a conviction of his diligence. He never entered the pulpit without previous preparation. Most of his sermons were written throughout, except the heads of application, in which he usually trusted to the ardour of his mind, enkindled by the subject which he had discussed, and guided by a holy influence. Not that he slavishly committed his compositions to his memory, and delivered them by rote. For, although his discourses were thus precomposed, and numbers of them remain, yet not one conveys a correct idea of what his preaching actually *was*. The reason is, that in the pulpit he followed, not so much the impression of his written language on the memory, as the holy and ardent bias of his soul, flowing in the channel which he had previously prepared. The sermon in the study was completely formed—correctly arranged—and well connected—but to the lifeless form, delineated on his paper, and impressed upon his memory, in the pulpit he imparted a living soul; a principle of ardent piety, which operated as a charm, the power of which few were able to resist.

Indeed so uniform was his habit of preparation for the pulpit, that when called upon suddenly to address some young persons, he said to a friend, "I wish you would address the children for me this afternoon; I have not prepared any thing—I have not considered a subject for them, and I would not offer, even to a *child*, that which cost me nothing."

But although this was his usual custom, yet, when extraordinary circumstances conspire to render a departure from it necessary, he could, with the

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greatest propriety and ease, delight and interest an audience from the rich treasures of his exalted mind. One instance of his powers, in extemporary and unpremeditated address, is related of him in Liverpool. Some important affair of a public nature engaged the general attention of the religious world, on a Sabbath evening, when as usual he had to preach; and, anticipating a thin attendance, he had prepared a sermon adapted to the supposed state of his auditory—but, when he reached the chapel, and saw it filled with anxious crowds, waiting to receive from his lips the words of life—his ardent mind seemed instantly inspired—he immediately fixed upon a passage more adapted to the scene, and with his pencil sketched the outline of a discourse, which, perhaps, in the whole series of his ministry, he never excelled.

But Mr. Spencer's diligence did not expend itself on commentators and elaborate pulpit compositions—he endeavoured to study Providence—to improve events—and, so far as he had opportunity, to read mankind. His sentiments on this subject may be in the recollection of the reader.* I believe he uniformly acted in accordance with them; and especially had an opportunity of doing this when he became the pastor of a church. The propriety—the importance—the utility of this kind of study, to a minister, is too obvious to need discussion. To its aid may be attributed, in a great measure, that adaptation to the ever varying scenes of the Christian life, which the sermons of Spencer usually possessed. He stu-

* See page 171.

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died the characters of the people of God—he marked with care the variations of their experience—the alternation of their feelings—and the vicissitudes of their enjoyment. Indeed, his knowledge in this respect was most amazing, especially in one so young. He seemed to know, and sweetly to divulge, what every Christian felt and mourned—and he had a balm of consolation for every sorrow he awakened—every wound he probed—As a student he was

Conscientious. He was so, in maintaining a habit of study, after the restraints of the college were withdrawn. Too many imagine, that what is improperly called, finishing their studies—that is, concluding their academic course, is in fact the legitimate close of all mental labour. Upon the stores then acquired, they are to feed, through the long years of an extended ministry, the church of God with wisdom and knowledge. Alas! for the people over whom such a pastor presides. The stores of that mind must be but scanty at the best, and soon expended; what then but mental and spiritual famine must ensue. Ill does it hode for a congregation, when their minister is a lover of pleasure—a lover of society—a lover of mirth—more than a lover of study. People should remember this, and should act accordingly. They love to have things brought from the sacred treasury before them, *new* as well as *old*—but the *new* cannot be obtained without research, nor the *old* presented, in an attractive form, without thought. To all this, time, and that no scanty portion, must be devoted. And the hours of study must be taken either from the day, or from the night—if from the night, it impairs the health—if

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from the day, it must abridge them of their minister's society. A congregation, then, cannot with justice expect to see their pastor always in their social circles, and yet demand from him on the Sabbath, what much and intense application only can enable him to produce. A minister worthy of his people's affection cannot be too much esteemed, nor his society too highly valued—but even this authorized attachment may be carried to an injurious length—a people may desire too much—God may gratify their wish—he may send them a *busy body* in the form, and with the pretensions of a minister—and it may be said of them, '*he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.*' For an unoccupied study, must cause, eventually, an empty mind.

Mr. Spencer was conscientious in the *direction which he gave to his studies.* Aware that he had but little time for preparatory labour, and a mighty work before him, we have already seen, that at Hoxton, whilst he performed with cheerfulness and credit the duties of his class, in the various departments of literature and science, yet he consecrated the first and most constant exercises of his mind to such studies as were immediately connected with preaching, and the pastoral office.* And when actually embarked in his most arduous profession, the little time he could procure for study he found too precious for the pursuit of any object whose claims, in connexion with the ministry, might hold but a secondary rank. Hence he pursued not so much the study of

* See page 103.

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general literature, as that of THEOLOGY. Aware that the sources of this sacred science, are the holy scriptures, and that to understand them correctly, requires an accurate knowledge of their original languages, he cultivated with great care, the study of the Hebrew and the Greek. To the former of these tongues he was peculiarly attached—his early labours in it have been already stated,* and I believe that his proficiency bore a just proportion to his exertions. On Theology he read very extensively, and for the most part the productions of the puritan divines. His library was small—it was but in its infancy; but it was well chosen. His study, which remained precisely in the state in which he left it on the morning of his death, was an object of considerable curiosity to the inhabitants and visitors of Liverpool: many judicious and venerable ministers came to see it, and all expressed their admiration of the taste which he displayed in the selection of his books. There was scarcely a volume that did not bear most obviously on the work of the ministry. The cast of a man's mind may be gathered from an inspection of his library, if the volumes composing it have been of his own selection. Whoever should form an estimate of Spencer's character from his books, must pronounce him a sound and well-informed divine.

As a student he was *successful*. If a man may be deemed successful who accomplishes what he proposes to himself, he certainly was so. He never desired to be a profound mathematician—an acute phi-

* See page 28.

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losopher—or an accomplished classic—but a useful preacher—a good divine. As a preacher, few could compare with him—as a divine, he surpassed most of his contemporaries, of the same age and standing. But his attainments in classical literature were far from being scanty; that he had read the best Greek and Roman authors, with considerable advantage, was obvious from the purity and elegance of his style. And in the perusal of those English writers, most justly celebrated for the correctness of their reasoning, and the chasteness of their composition—he was well trained, whilst under the tuition of his excellent and revered friend at Harwich. Upon most subjects he was well informed, and could converse with ease. He disliked controversy, at any rate in public, however he might be disposed to try his strength in private. His chief excellence did not lie in the power of conducting a deep, an intricate, and long continued process of reasoning to a triumphant close. He rather excelled in clearly unfolding the more prominent features of the gospel—in stating with correctness the great truths of Christianity, and supporting them by arguments purely *scriptural*—for such discussions he was amply furnished. His knowledge of the Bible was most extensive, and his quotations from it were, in general, remarkably apt and striking. But it was in prayer, chiefly, that his familiarity with the Bible was observed. Not a sentiment escaped him, for which he had not suitable language borrowed from the scriptures: and this rendered his prayers peculiarly rich, simple, and appropriate.

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Of elegant accomplishments he possessed but little. I believe he never touched the pencil. He was fond of music, but he used no instrument, and though perpetually humming tunes to favourite hymns, he was not a good singer. He was much devoted to the love of poetry, especially that of Milton, Young, Cowper, and Kirk White. He was exceedingly attached to Kelly's hymns, and frequently repeated from them, with great fervour and delight. When a boy he courted the muse himself, but not with much success. Though not disciplined in the schools of fashionable life, his manners were easy, and his action graceful; and these, added to a lovely countenance, and an elegant form, rendered him interesting, both in his public engagements, and in his private intercourse.

AS A CHRISTIAN,

He was FERVENT—HOLY—and HUMBLE.—*Fervent;* his piety was the ardour of an unquenchable flame. With him religion was no matter of mere profession and convenience; nor did it lose its impression by the frequent recurrence of its subjects and its duties —he seemed to live under its abiding influence—it was wrought into the constitution of his nature—its principles were the springs—its precepts the rule—its objects the end of all his actions. To this he ever had respect—what opposed it he heartily abhorred—what clashed with it he cheerfully resigned —what injured it he conscientiously avoided. His love to God was ardent. In this I think he much resembled Mr. Pearce, of Birmingham; and, indeed, often, when contemplating the life of Spencer,

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my thoughts have involuntarily recurred to certain traits of character preserved in the memoirs of that glorified saint.* His love to God shed a glorious lustre on his whole character and conduct; every thing that came within the sphere of his influence or operation was irradiated by it. But chiefly would I confine myself now to the influence of this noble principle upon himself. It inspired him with a love of piety: as a Christian he was eminent for

Holiness. He contemplated the character of God, and was attracted to it by its purity. "I shall not," says his friend, "easily forget the delight which sparkled in his eye when conversing upon the divine attribute—holiness. 'How sweet,' said he, 'is that word *holy!*—*holy* Father—*holy* Saviour—*holy* Spirit—*holy* scriptures. Surely if there is one word dearer to me than another, it is the word *holy*." During his residence at Hoxton, the same friend observed to a student in the institution, whose attention he wished to direct to the character of Spencer, "Perhaps you perceive youthful levity in him?" "No," he replied, "I have remarked him particularly, but it was for his *spirituality*."

His ardent love of holiness enkindled and cherished in his bosom a corresponding hatred to sin; and so strong was this principle of love to God, that the dread of offending his purity sometimes amounted almost to terror, and enveloped his mind in most distressing gloom. A paper composed at one of

* See Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce, A. M. with extracts from some of his most interesting letters, by Andrew Fuller.

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these melancholy seasons of depression has been recently discovered; it is entitled,

"MISERABLE ILLS UNDER WHICH I DAILY GROAN."

BODILY.

An incessant bilious complaint.

General langour, nervous feeling, and head-ache.

The fatigues of my great and repeated exertions in preaching.

MENTAL.

The illness of——

The awful weight of responsibility attaching to the ministerial work.

The extreme distance between myself and my old, choice, and invaluable friends.

The impossibility I discover of visiting all the people I wish.

The little time I can appropriate to study.

The dreadful state of coldness and formality in religion, which I know the eternal God sees in me, and which, I fear, he hates me for.

The dread I often feel, lest, after all, I should dwell forever in HELL FIRE!

Oh! God, who is sufficient for these things? Oh! cast me not away from thy presence—take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Oh! God be mereiful to me a guilty and a wretched sinner. *Be it so*—for Christ's sake. Amen.

Monday Evening, May 27, 1811.

But this was not the usual tone of his mind. Few there are so highly favoured but that, sometimes,

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they are called to walk in darkness. The same apostle who declares at one period, *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed unto him until that day;* at another cries, *O wretched man that I am, &c.* and again, *Lest, after having preached unto others, I myself should be a cast-away.* This document is a commentary on a passage in one of Spencer's letters:—"Be assured that I as well as yourself have walked in darkness, and complained that there was no light. Fluctuations in experience are, I am sure, my lot, &c."* He was

Humble. For abundant evidence of the truth of this assertion, I need only appeal to his correspondence, his conversation, and his conduct; they each demonstrate that he walked *humbly with his God.* Indeed so prominent a feature in his character was humility, that his ministry derived from this prolific source a considerable portion of its excellence. "For," as a friend observed, "his deep humility and self-debasement leading him wholly to distrust himself, his affections ascended continually to the Saviour, and brought down that abundant supply of spirituality which animated both his sermons and his life."

A minister one day unguardedly said to him, "Mr. Spencer, I have been reading of your fame." "My fame, Sir." "Yes; I have been reading in one of the public prints, that the Rev. Thomas Spencer has been preaching several eloquent and impressive sermons at Brighton; and if you will call at my house,

* Page 158.

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I will shew you the newspaper." Spencer declined going; and his remarks afterwards were worthy of himself.

"I am strongly pressed to visit Mr. ——," said he; "I cannot; his circumstances are so much above mine, that it would be dangerous for me. If I get a habit of visiting the rich, I shall neglect the poor, and my expectation of usefulness lies among *them*."

His humility led him early to solicit, and highly to value, the *fidelity* of friendship. As he had a deep and intimate acquaintance with his own heart, he knew and deplored its corruptions; and turned with contempt from those professed and dangerous friendships, which only tend to feed the flame he was anxious to stifle and subdue. No friend of his was ever more faithful to him than Mr. B——; and few persons were more highly esteemed by him. Speaking of that gentleman, he said, "I owe him particular respect, and I wish to shew it."

There was one instance in which his late attendance at a place of worship, where he was to preach, was unhandsomely attributed to pride. "He takes liberties," said they, "because he is popular." Let not his memory suffer by such an imputation. It is in my power to roll away from the character of our departed friend this cloud. It was his attention to the duties of the closet, and not his pride, which caused his late attendance that day. It has been already observed, that he always went from his closet to the pulpit. On that day he allowed himself the proper time for retirement, intending to take a coach from the city, where he dined, to Walworth,

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where he was to preach. But a sudden fall of snow engaged every conveyance, and he was obliged to walk: the distance was considerable, and the consequence was, he was too late. When an error in the conduct of a minister is committed, reasons are easily assigned, and unhappily those the most uncharitable come the readiest to hand; and few have sufficient generosity or justice to inquire whether that which they have chosen is correct or not.*

The following extract of a letter, dated July 3, 1810, shall close this part of our review of Spencer's character. It was addressed to one who feared that his popularity might have an unhappy influence upon his mind:

"A thousand thanks for the solicitude you express for my safety in the midst of the snares and dangers which appear to you to surround me; never may I be so left as to lose the dignity of the CHRISTIAN, much more of the MINISTERIAL character, by being pleased with so empty a nothing as popular applause; I cannot but recollect that this is a distinction not unfrequently bestowed upon the most unworthy of men, and it is so little calculated to afford any thing like happiness or peace of mind, that I hope I shall always

* It may be said that this incident is too trifling to be recorded. I do not think so. Nothing is unimportant which illustrates character; and it is in these *little* things, for the most part, that the character may be ascertained. Besides, the memory of the dead is sacred; and I should not discharge the duties which I have taken upon myself in the compilation of this volume, to the satisfaction of my own mind, were I to suffer any spot or cloud to remain upon the lovely character of Spencer which I am able to remove.

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be taught to esteem it a mere puff of noisy breath that so being elevated above it, I may seek that reward alone, which a sense of THE SMILE OF GOD will ever bestow. Oh! my friend, may those pleasures be mine which arise from the testimony of my conscience, that I am seeking to please that Divine Being, 'whose frown can disappoint the proudest hopes, whose approbation prosper even mine."

AS A MINISTER.

We shall contemplate Mr. Spencer as a PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL, AND PASTOR OF A CHURCH. Though for the most part these two offices are combined, yet those who understand their nature, and the duties they involve, must be conscious of the distinction which this division implies. Many a man is an admirable *preacher*, who is but ill qualified for the retired and constant duties of the pastoral office; and many a man is exemplary as a *pastor*, who has little except his piety, which indeed is much, to recommend him as a *preacher*. As Spencer united in his own person the two offices, so did he eminently possess the qualifications of both.

As a PREACHER his discourses were *purely evangelical:* this was the cast of all his sermons. He never preached to display himself,—but always to exalt the Saviour: this was his constant aim, and to accomplish it, he dwelt much upon the beauties of his character—the charms of his person—the fulness of his atonement—the perfection of his righteousness. He perpetually dwelt upon his willingness and ability to save; and in order to demonstrate the necessity and the value of his great salvation, he

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seldom failed to resort to the fallen, polluted, guilty, helpless state of man. He consulted not the inclinations, the passions or the prejudices of his hearers, but preached simply, faithfully, and affectionately, the most humiliating, as well as the most animating doctrines of the gospel. Whatever text he struck, living waters seemed immediately to flow. Whatever was the subject, or the occasion—his holy and ardent mind, ever panting for the salvation of immortal souls, connected with it truths and considerations, the most solemn and important. His applications were forcible and impressive. There he wrestled with the people, with a fervour, resembling that with which, in prayer, he wrestled with his God. He seemed to exhaust every argument which might be brought to bear upon his great object, and to these he often added appeals and entreaties, the most tender and affecting. *Then* he seemed to lose sight of every consideration, but his own responsibility, and his people's good—and as though the congregation before him were the only people remaining to be saved, and as though every time of preaching was the only opportunity afforded him of using the means for their salvation, he besought them, as an ambassador for Christ, to be reconciled to God.

The general cast of his preaching may be gathered from his texts, which are freely scattered up and down in the preceding pages. By his confession of faith it will be seen, that his sentiments were most decidedly what have obtained, in the Christian world, the epithet, *Calvinistic*—exactly in conformity with the Shorter Catechism of the Assembly of Divines.

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To these doctrines he was most warmly attached, and as they were the subjects of his firm belief, so were they the constant topics of his discourse, both in public and in private. Valuing these doctrines so highly, and cherishing so deep a sense of their importance, we cannot be surprised that he should feel and express regret, when he saw them, in the sermons of ministers, neglected and cast into the shade. Perhaps, in his mode of expression, on such occasions, he was sometimes incautious.* Admitting that it was so, we cannot but admire the principle. Where doctrines assume, in the view of the individual, an importance, similar to that which we are accustomed to attach to those grand principles which formed the basis of Mr. Spencer's ministry, we cannot be surprised if he expresses warmly his regret, when he beholds them undervalued or abandoned.

* Christians, and especially Christian ministers, should be sparing in the use of those broad and unqualified assertions respecting their brethren in the ministry, which are so easily *made*, yet so difficult to *prove*, and so injurious in their influence. It is easy to say, *he does not preach the gospel*, of a minister—who loves it, and propagates it with as much ardour as the censurer himself. He may not preach the gospel with the same phrases—in precisely the same style of language. Perhaps the censurer loves to dwell entirely on the *promises* of the gospel—on the *sovereignty* and *freedom* of Divine grace—on salvation as the *unmerited* gift of God by *faith* and not by works:—all this, the man he censures believes and preaches too; but then with the *promises* of the gospel, he blends the *threatnings*,—and with the assurance that salvation is of *grace* and by *faith*—the importance of *obedience*, and a *holy life* as the evidence of saving faith.

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His discourses were *judicious*—he particularly excelled in the adaptation of his subjects, and the selection of his texts, to particular circumstances and occasions. His sermons were never flippant, nor bombastic—but always solid and simple—full of sound divinity, conveyed in language, which, by its copiousness,—its elegance,—its fluency,—astonished every auditor. His skill in meeting the several cases of his hearers, has been already noticed. Every age and every rank received their portion from his public instructions: the aged were astonished at his deep experience; the young were charmed with his affectionate manner; and few, very few, were the instances in which the hearers did not depart, each affirming, that there was something in the sermon that exactly suited them.*

* A passage in a sermon recently published by the Rev. Robert Hall, admirably describes this quality of Mr. Spencer's preaching. "Without descending to such a minute specification of circumstances, as shall make our addresses personal, they ought unquestionably to be characteristic; that the conscience of the audience may feel the hand of the preacher searching it, and every individual know where to class himself. The preacher who aims at doing good will endeavour, above all things, to insulate his hearers, to place each of them apart, and render it impossible for him to escape by losing himself in the crowd. At the day of judgment, the attention excited by the surrounding scene, the strange aspect of nature, the dissolution of the elements, and the last trump, will have no other effect than to cause the reflections of the sinner to return with a more overwhelming tide on his own character, his sentence, his unchanging destiny; and, amid the innumerable millions who surround him, he will *mourn apart*. It is thus the Christian minister should endea-

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As a preacher, Mr. Spencer was remarkable for *Animation*; indeed this was so strongly characteristic of him, that almost every other feature might have been resolved into this. Mr. Styles, than whom on man is better able to form and express an opinion of his worth, most correctly observes, "if I were to sum up Mr. Spencer's character in one word, comprehending in it only what is excellent and ennobling to human nature, I should say it was ANIMATION. His intellect was feeling, and his feeling was intellect. His thoughts breathed, and his words glowed. He said nothing tamely, he did nothing with half a heart." With him, the animation of the pulpit was enkindled by the devotion of the closet. His communion with God was deep and habitual, and this rendered him most feelingly alive to the great truths which he delivered—whilst the ardent desire which he cherished for the salvation of sinners supplied, with constant fuel, the flame of his zeal. In the pulpit, he appeared to be abstracted from every consideration, but those immediately connected with his subject, and his office. It was this holy fervour, perhaps, which constituted the great charm of his ministry. The simplest observations from his lips were invested, by his manner of expressing them, with an importance which demanded attention. The interest which he felt himself in the momentous topics he discussed, he communicated to his hearers; and it was im-

vour to prepare the tribunal of conscience, and turn the eyes of every one of his hearers on himself."—*Discourse delivered to the Rev. James Robertson at his ordination, by Robert Hall, A. M.*

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possible not in some degree to feel, when every one saw how eagerly intent he was upon promoting their eternal welfare.

"I remember," says a friend, "that one evening when we reached Hoxton, in good time for *him* but too late for *me*, as *he* was to preach, the chapel was thronged, and I stood in the passage through which he passed to the pulpit. His delicate frame was too weak to sustain the animation of his mighty spirit. His half-closed mouth, fixed eye, flushed cheek, and panting breast, pained me to the heart as he passed me, and loudly spoke my awful responsibility, possessed of such a friend, and such a ministry. He afterwards told me that he generally was agitated in his way to the pulpit, but that when he reached it he seemed to feel himself at home. I once asked a medical friend, who heard him at Hoxton with me, 'how he heard?' '*Very* uncomfortably.' 'Why?' 'Because I saw that his preaching is at a physical expense to himself, beyond what you have any idea of. Every part of the service, except his repetition of the Lord's prayer, was at an expense which his frame is incapable of supporting."

As a preacher, he was

Solemn. He never degraded the awful dignity of his station, and his office, by *buffoonery* and *jests*, —he was popular—but he never courted popularity, by the practice of any thing that was *time-serving*, *crafty* or *mean.* As an eminent judge once observed, "he did not despise popularity, but he loved—not the popularity which he must follow—but the popularity that followed him." Who,

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but must behold with mingled sorrow and contempt, the low and disgusting arts, to which some men, who style themselves preachers of the gospel, will condescend, in order to gain the temporary admiration of the vulgar. There are some indeed, whose minds are unhappily so constituted, that they find it *impossible* to forego their humour, even in the pulpit. In such characters, while we deplore the failing, we esteem the men, and revere their excellencies. But where there is no talent to command respect—no superior worth to induce the exercise of forbearance and love, but mere tricks are resorted to, for the sake of obtaining a name, every feeling is absorbed in that of mingled pity and disgust.

Mr. Spencer's preaching had a *holy tendency*.—He loved the gospel, and gave to its leading truths the prominency in his discourses, but on them, as on a firm foundation, he built a superstructure of the purest morality. Whilst he directed his hearers to a higher source for acceptance with God, than obedience to the commands of the law, he never failed to enforce its precepts upon the practice of Christians, as the rule of their life. Upon the absolute necessity of holiness, both of heart and conduct, he constantly dwelt, and from every topic which he discussed, he deduced those practical lessons, which it naturally supplied.

But, although as a preacher he obtained almost unexampled popularity, he was yet remarkably

Modest, and *unassuming*. No man would better take a hint, or receive reproof with greater humility and even thankfulness, but no man was more reluctant to give either, though he might have presumed

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much upon the importance which attended his station, and have dealt out his censures with a liberal hand.

"Do you think," observed a friend to him, "the expression, 'our realm,' which you use in prayer, quite right?" "Is it not?" "It may be so—but I never knew any individual except George III. and Thomas Spencer, use it, the one in his proclamations —the other in his prayers." Constantly as he used the phrase before—it never was known to escape him afterwards.

"Mr. S." said a gentleman, belonging to a certain congregation, to whom he was about to preach, "the people come in very late, in general. I wish you would reprove them for it this morning." "Oh, no, Sir," he replied, "it would ill become a visiter and a youth like me; it ought to be a stated or an aged minister."

He shrunk from the public notice to which he was exposed, and usually walked the street in great haste, and with downcast eyes, anxious to escape the gaze of men.

In the pulpit, Mr. Spencer was an interesting figure. His countenance had the fine bloom of youth. His voice was full toned and musical. His action was graceful and appropriate. He sometimes leaned over the pulpit, as if conversing with the people, with the greatest earnestness, and anxious to be so plain and explicit as that none should misunderstand. At others he stood with manly dignity, displaying with spontaneous ease, all the characteristics of genuine eloquence.

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That as a preacher he was faultless, no one will be disposed to assert; but his faults were those of youth, which time and experience would have certainly corrected. He was sometimes too rapid—his zeal, like an impetuous torrent, bore him along, and would brook no check,—by which his voice was often strained, and the usual placidity and dignity of his style somewhat interrupted. I conclude this sketch of his character as a preacher, by a note inserted at the close of Mr. Hall's discourse, above referred to:—

"The sensation excited by the sudden removal of that extraordinary young man, [Mr. Spencer,] accompanied with such affecting circumstances, has not subsided, nor abated, as we are informed, much of its force. The event which has drawn so great a degree of attention, has been well improved in several excellent discourses on the occasion. The unequalled admiration he excited while living, and the deep and universal concern expressed at his death, demonstrate him to have been no ordinary character; but one of those rare specimens of human nature, which the great Author of it produces at distant intervals, and exhibits for a moment, while He is hastening to *make them up amongst his jewels.* The high hopes entertained of this admirable youth, and the shock approaching to consternation, occasioned by his death, will probably remind the classical reader of the inimitable lines of Virgil on Marcellus:

> O nate, ingentem luctum ne quœre tuorum.
> Ostendent terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra
> Esse sinent.

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"The writer of this deeply regrets his never having had an opportunity of witnessing his extraordinary powers; but from all he has heard from the best judges, he can entertain no doubt, that his talents in the pulpit were unrivalled, and that, had his life been spared, he would, in all probability have carried the art of preaching, if it may be so styled, to a greater perfection than it ever attained, at least, in this kingdom. His eloquence appears to have been of the purest stamp, effective, not ostentatious, consisting less in the striking preponderance of any one quality, requisite to form a public speaker, than in an exquisite combination of them all; whence resulted an extraordinary power of impression, which was greatly aided by a natural and majestic elocution. To these eminent endowments, he added, from the unanimous testimony of those who knew him best, a humility and modesty, which, while they concealed a great part of his excellencies from himself, rendered them the more engaging and attractive. When we reflect on these circumstances, we need the less wonder at the passionate concern excited by his death. For it may truly be said of him, as of St. Stephen, *that devout men made great lamentation over him.* May the impression produced by the event never be effaced; and, above all, may it have the effect of engaging such as are embarked in the Christian ministry, to *work while it is called to-day.*"

In directing my readers to a contemplation of Mr. Spencer's character as

A Pastor, I am influenced more, by a desire to render this general view of our departed friend com-

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plete and to do ample justice to his memory, than by the prospect of any very considerable practical result. There are so many examples of pastoral diligence, furnished by the recorded lives of men venerable for their age, and valuable for their experience, that I cannot anticipate much from the pattern of a youth, just entered on his labours. But such as he was I am bound to represent him.

In his visits to the sick he was constant and tender.

His enlargement in prayer, at the bed-side of the diseased and dying, was truly astonishing. The depth of his experience and ability in speaking to the cases of the afflicted, appeared mysterious. But it was soon explained by a holy providence.—For whilst his friends saw him young and healthy, just entering into the world, He who seeth not as man seeth, beheld in him the Christian of fifteen years standing, just taking wing for glory. This consideration may tend to check invidious comparisons,—for it is certainly unjust to compare one, in whom God has cut short his work, in righteousness, with those who, though older in years, are younger in grace, and have perhaps a long and honourable course before them.

His intercourse with his people was cheerful, spiritual and instructive.

He was no gossip. It was wished, by some, that he had been more frequent in his visits. But it is difficult so to equalise the attention, in a large body of people, as to satisfy the demands of all, and by apparent neglect give offence to none. Where he did visit, he always left a happy impression of his piety, his wisdom, and his amiable disposition. He ab-

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horred the idle tales of the day,—he was no friend to scandal. He endeavoured always to direct the conversation into a useful and pleasing channel. He was cheerful, without levity, and serious without affectation. There was nothing formal or studied in his manners. In him, every thing was natural, and through all the departments of his character, there was a harmony of feature—a unity of principle, which every one observed and admired.

In all the duties of the pastoral office, he was well informed, affectionate, and constant.

He knew what belonged to his office—and never failed to practice what he knew. He made full proof of his ministry. He was a scribe well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom. A workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth—giving a portion to each, in due season—sparing the irregularities or prejudices of none—but seeking with ardent affection the good of all—he commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Early he girded on the armour—and soon became a leader in the armies of the Prince of Peace. He has fought a good fight, he has finished his course—and now he enjoys the crown.

REFLECTIONS.

I am unwilling further to detain the attention of the reader to a volume, which, but for its interesting subject, would have wearied his patience long ago, and which has imperceptibly swollen to a bulk, far greater than that which the writer, originally, intended it to obtain, by any additional reflections, es-

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pecially as the preceding pages abound with observations of a practical nature, as the narrative suggested them—and as almost every topic of improvement which might now be introduced has been fully anticipated and forcibly expressed by the interesting publications which appeared upon the death of Spencer. And yet, were I to dismiss the volume, without any effort at a final improvement of the subject, I might be charged with neglecting the great object of biography—*utility;* and the book might be considered as deficient in the most important point.

In Spencer we see,—

First, *That obscurity of birth or station presents no insurmountable barrier to the progress of real excellence.*

The history of past and present times furnishes unnumbered illustrations of this remark. Many who have lived to enlighten and to bless the world—who have obtained rank, and fortune, and renown, were born in obscurity, and passed their earliest years in the oblivion of humble life. Let such as feel at present the pressure of circumstances, yet pant for scenes of honourable exertion, and extensive usefulness, ponder the life of Spencer and be encouraged. If God designs to use them for the public good, he will, by an unexpected train of events, in his providence call them forth; if not, let them neither rush unbidden from their sphere, nor occupy their station in sullen discontent; if a wider field be not allowed them, let them cultivate with cheerfulness the little spot to which they are confined. The most retired hamlet affords abundant opportunities of doing good;

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and many a man to whom it is denied to enlighten crowded cities and populous towns, may be a star of the first magnitude in the village where he dwells.

Secondly, *We see in Spencer the commanding influence of genuine and fervent piety.* This was the secret spring of all his energy—the fuel of his animation—the source of his popularity. That his mind was well furnished with solid truths—that his manner was engaging—that his form was graceful—that his countenance was lovely—that his language was elegant—that his voice was fine—is admitted; but it was his ardent piety which gave to each of these a charm, and awoke in the breasts of his auditors a feeling of reverence and solemnity, which the simple exhibition of them could never have produced. The graces of genuine eloquence, and the stores of a cultivated mind, are precious; but without piety, they are as '*sounding brass and tinkling cymbals:*' they may delight the ear, but never will impress the heart; and it is not, usually, the labours of the most polished and enlightened of his ministers, that Jehovah deigns especially to bless; but rather the unwearied exertions of those, whom the love of Christ and of immortal souls has rendered zealous in the sacred cause.

Thirdly, *We see in the labours of Spencer, an admirable example of diligence, and in the success that crowned them, a strong encouragement to exertion.*

So short was the period of his stated ministry, that we can only measure it by months: it had not reached to years. But few, perhaps, whose term of labour was so short as his, were ever honoured with more success; whilst many who have seen the num-

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ber of his months often repeated in years of anxious labour, have not been favoured with so much. If *all* prove faithful unto death, whom he enlisted, whilst on earth, beneath the banners of the cross, he will head a goodly company, when the hosts of the redeemed shall be assembled at the judgment day. Who that knew and loved him, but must anticipate the joy with which he then shall say, '*here am I, Father, and the children whom thou hast given me.*'

Let the example of his exertions and success stimulate, quicken, and encourage ours. We work for the same Master, and are engaged in the same cause. And, to the student or the youthful preacher who may honour these pages with his regard, I will add, your term may be as short—if it be not as *successful*, let it be as *diligent*. The diligence is ours, —the success is God's: He will not demand at our hands what is not ours to secure—He will give His rewards of grace to the faithful servant, whether his success be proportioned to his exertions or not; and we are '*a sweet savour unto Him in them that are saved, and in them that perish.*'

Fourthly, *From the early and sudden removal of Spencer, let churches learn to prize the labours of holy and devoted men, while they enjoy them.* Alas! too many only learn the value of their privileges by their removal. They neglected or lightly esteemed, whilst living, the minister, upon whose memory they heap eulogies and honours when departed; and I believe, that some have even bedewed the ashes of their pastors with affected tears, who accelerated and embittered their passage to the grave, by unkindness and neglect! Not so the

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people whom the death of Spencer suddenly bereaved. The tears with which they embalmed his memory, were suitable to the respect they bore his person—the love they cherished for his friendship—and the sense they entertain of his transcendent worth.* O that every minister living were as much beloved!—dying were as unaffectedly deplored!

Fifthly, *In Spencer we see the excellence of real religion*—how it sweetens labour—sooths in affliction—supports in trial—and animates the soul in scenes of disappointment, and hours of care. To few are allotted severer labours—to few, so young, are measured heavier trials than those which he endured. But few, upon the whole, have possessed a greater share of happiness: there were intervals of sorrow, and clouds would sometimes obscure the brightness of his sun; but for the most

* By some liberal expositors of God's providence, the death of Spencer has been pronounced a judgment on the people, for what they have termed, "their *idolatrous attachment*" to him. Alas! the *idolizing* of its ministers is, surely, not the crying sin of the church at the present day! But was there any thing in the conduct of the people over whom Spencer presided, so contrary to the mind of God as to excite thus strongly his displeasure, in loving a man who was beloved wherever he was known—and revering an office which Christ himself has invested with so much dignity? Let such bold infringers of the prerogative of God, who presume to assign reasons for his conduct, when he has not deigned to give any, read,—"*Know them that labour amongst you, and over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, and be at peace among yourselves.*" Let them take the solemn admonition this passage gives; and perhaps their own ministers will have no occasion to regret that they have done so.

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part his hope was lively, and his prospects fair. He enjoyed religion upon earth—he anticipated the consummation of its bliss in heaven: and now he has entered into the joy of his Lord. His life was piety, and his end was peace.

Sixthly, *In the sudden removal of Spencer, we mark the mysterious conduct of Jehovah's providence.*

At first sight the event might stagger the strongest faith, for he was snatched away at a period when his life seemed of the utmost moment to the people over whom he presided, and the circle in which he moved. Scarcely had his talents reached their maturity; his character was even then unfolding; from the promise of his youth, his friends dwelt with rapture on the anticipations of his manhood, and every day added some strokes of reality to the picture they drew,—when suddenly, in the bloom of his youth—at the commencement of his course,—just entered on his labours—he is arrested by the arm of death, and conducted to the silent grave. Was his death *untimely?* No,—he had seen a good old age in usefulness, though not in years: "that life is long that answers life's great end." His end was fully answered, and he was gathered to the grave in peace. Was his death *severe?* No—to *him* it was tranquil, and serene; he crossed the river of Jordan, singing as he went, and in an unexpected moment, found himself safely landed on the shores of immortality. No raging billows awoke his fears—no agonies disturbed his countenance—death respected his loveliness, and preserved the beauty of the form, when the spirit that animated

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it was gone. But whilst for *him* his death was peaceful, was their ought of *mercy* in it to his *friends?* Yes—if they review and act upon the lessons it conveys, there is; to survivers it declares, that excellence and beauty must fade and die—let them seek an interest in HIM, in whom whosoever liveth and believeth shall not die eternally—to the *church* it will endear the assurance of HIS care, who is independent of instruments and the conqueror of death. To the *young* it is a solemn admonition of the uncertainty of life—the instability of all terrestrial good. To such as attended his ministry—what a powerful application is it of the many sermons they have heard him preach, with such delight—but to so little profit! How must the event of the succeeding morning rivet the impression of those solemn words which, on the last Sabbath evening of his life, he addressed to them: "I shall soon meet you at the bar of God; I shall be there!"—*O that they were wise, that they knew these things—that they would consider their latter end.*

END OF THE MEMOIRS.

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APPENDIX.

No. I.

The Dissenters of various denominations have numerous Academies, partly endowed by munificent individuals, and partly supported by voluntary subscription, for the education of young men for the work of the ministry. There are institutions of this kind at Homerton, Hoxton, Hackney, Wymondley, Rotherham, Axminster, Idle, Wrexham, Bristol, Stepney, Caermarthen, York, Glasgow, and other places. In these schools of religion and literature the course of study is for the most part liberal, and some of them have supplied the churches of Christ, for many generations, with sound and learned divines. The compiler had the honour to receive his education in the Old College, Homerton, a truly venerable institution, over which the Rev. Dr. John Pye Smith, and the Rev. Thomas Hill, preside. The following is an outline of the principles, upon which that institution is founded, and the course of study which is there pursued.

It is held as a fundamental principle among the Orthodox Dissenters, that no young man should be destined for the ministry as a mere profession; or educated with a view to that office, till he gives rational indications of that internal and sound piety, which arises from the operations of the Holy Spirit of God upon the heart. Their first care therefore is, to select such characters only as candidates for

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the office of the ministry; and, in so doing, it happens not unfrequently, that the individuals whom ministers and private Christians select out of their congregations, have been engaged more or less in the avocations of secular life, and have enjoyed only a common education. It appears upon the average of many years, that about *two thirds* of the ministers, educated in the Old College, at Homerton, have been of this description. The remaining third has consisted of young men, whose whole previous life had been devoted to literary pursuits, and whose superior advantages of education, had been adorned by early and promising piety. But in all cases, the prerequisites for admission into this ancient institution are, *credible and ample testimonies* that the applicant is, in the severest judgment of Christian reason, a sincere, devoted, and practical disciple of Christ, born of God, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In addition to this grand requisite, the Directors of the Academy require some evidence of respectable talents, and such as are likely to improve the advantages to be conferred. As a further security for the attainment of this object, students who are thus approved at their first introduction, are admitted upon a probation of three months. The evidences of piety and talents, displayed during this probationary period, determine the full admission of a young candidate.

If the student, at his entrance into the house, should not be possessed of classical literature sufficient to enable him with ease and accuracy to read ordinary Latin and Greek authors, (e. g. Quintilian and Horace, Xenophon and Homer,) he enters on grammatical and classical studies, and attends to them solely till he is judged fit for the next class of pursuits: this period is seldom less than two years, and sometimes it is longer.

The Rev. Thomas Hill, Classical and Mathematical Tutor, conducts this department with distinguished ability, and with an intenseness of application, worthy of the most grateful mention: under his di-

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rection, the students read the most valuable Roman and Greek classics, with a strict attention to accuracy of construction, parsing, prosody, and the cultivation of a just and elegant taste for the beauties of those immortal authors. The course thus begun is continued to the close of a student's residence in the college, which, in most cases, is nearly six years. During the two years of pursuits, solely classical and philosophical, attention is also paid to English composition; and themes, on subjects chiefly moral and religious, are composed by those students whom Mr. Hill judges fit; and one day at least, in each fortnight, is spent by him in reviewing and animadverting on these essays.

After the students have entered upon the course, called for the sake of distinction, *Academical*, they still continue their attendance upon the Classical Tutor; and they add to their improving acquaintance with the best authors of profane antiquity, the study of the Hebrew language, and afterwards of the Syriac. They also enjoy his Lectures in Geometry and Algebra, in which Euclid and Bonnycastle's Algebra are the text-books.

The *Academical course*, upon which students enter as soon as their proficiency in classical learning renders it proper, is principally Theological; but Lectures are also regularly read in other departments of science and general knowledge. The duties of the Divinity Tutor embrace,

I. The THEOLOGICAL Department, which comprehends six distinct courses, or plans of instruction.

1. The compilation of a systematical arrangement of Christian Theology, by the judgment and industry of each student himself. Dr. Smith, whose profound classical, theological and biblical knowledge, renders him admirably qualified for the important office which he fills, puts into the hands of the students a large manuscript work, entitled "First Lines of

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Christian Theology." This commences with an introductory address, consisting of observations and counsels upon the moral state and dispositions of the mind which are necessary for the profitable study of divine truth;—upon the utility and subserviency of literature and general science for the advancement of Theological knowledge, and usefulness in the ministry:—and upon the conduct of the understanding in the actual study of divinity under its various aspects of liberal and impartial inquiry, interpretation of the scriptures, and the determination of controversies. This is followed by the syllabus, which forms the body of the work, and consists of definitions, propositions, hints of solution, corollaries, scholia, &c. with references to authors of merit under every particular.

The design of this plan is not only to lead the student into a clear and logical method of deducing divine truth from its proper source, but to engage his industry of research and meditation, to take him to the first fountains of knowledge, and to excite his judgment, his powers of discrimination, and all his talents, to the most profitable kind of exercise. When the student has, with suitable attention and diligence, completed the scheme, he possesses a body of Christian divinity and moral philosophy, thoroughly digested, methodically arranged, the fruit of his own labour and industry, and the systematical depository of his future acquisitions.

2. A Polemical Lecture, designed to furnish a fair and comprehensive view of the most important controversies of the present day; inculcating at the same time, the value and importance of truth, and the absurdity and danger of scepticism or indifference.

3. An Exegetical Lecture on some book of the Greek Testament, generally an epistle.

4. A course on Biblical Criticism, and the principles of sacred Philology and Interpretation.

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5. Lectures on Preaching, and the other duties of the pastoral office. Dr. Doddridge's Lectures on those subjects are the text-book.

6. Lectures on Ecclesiastical History.

II. A course of Lectures on the Elements of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, and Natural History.

III. A course on Logic and the Philosophy of the Mind.

IV. A course on the study of Civil History and Antiquities; attainments prerequisite for that study, observations on historical writers, rules and advices for securing the greatest sum of advantage from the pursuit, and an inquiry into the objects most interesting to a Christian divine, to which the study of history should be rendered subservient.

The preceding statement may be considered as a fair specimen of the usual course of study pursued in the best regulated of our Dissenting Colleges. The subject of the preceding memoirs received his education in the truly respectable Academy at Hoxton:—over that institution the Rev. Robert Simpson, the Rev. Henry Forster Burder, A. M. and the Rev. —— Hooper, A. M. preside with distinguished ability.*

In these respective Academies, public examinations are annually held, in which a close and critical inquiry is made into the diligence—the acquirements, and the conduct of each student.

* I should be happy to present a statement of the system adopted in that excellent institution, but I am not furnished with materials for the purpose. Such a statement was not deemed necessary by those of whom I requested information. I think it of importance to mention this, lest I should be considered as *partial*, in giving so minute a detail of the course at Homerton, and saying so little of the plans pursued at Hoxton.

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No. II.

Specimens of Mr. Spencer's early exercises in preaching.

From the following outlines of some of his first sermons may be gathered what was his general style of preaching at the period of their composition.

ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

Dated March 6, 1807.

Matthew xviii. 20. *'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'*

We shall make a few general observations on the text in the following order:

I. That it is the duty and interest of Christians to assemble together for the purposes of religious worship.

This duty was

1. *Practised by ancient believers.* Zion was the well known place to which the tribes went up—Christ frequented the Synagogue. The apostles met together, &c.
2. *It is enjoined in the sacred scriptures.* See Ps. c. 4. Heb. x. 25.
3. *Fraught with the richest blessings.*

II. That it must be done in the name of Christ.

1. *In obedience to his command.*
2. *In the use of his appointed means.*
3. *In dependence on his assistance.*
4. *With a view to his glory.*

III. That although but few persons thus assemble, yet that is no objection to their obtaining the divine favour and blessing. *'Wherever two or three,' &c.*

We remark in the first place,

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1. *That God regards the sincerity of the worshippers, not their number.*

2. *The happy experience of worshippers in all ages of the world.* As a confirmation of the sentiment,

3. *The positive assertion of the text.*

IV. THAT JESUS IS PRESENT WITH ALL THOSE WHO THUS ASSEMBLE TOGETHER.

How is Christ present in his worshipping assemblies?

For what purpose is Christ present with his worshipping people?

1. *To observe the manner of their worship.*

2. *To bless those who are earnestly seeking him.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is God, or he could not be present in all the assemblies of his people at the same time.

2. How inexcusable is the conduct of those who neglect public worship.

3. How great will be the happiness of the heavenly world, to all the sincere worshippers of Christ.

THE SECOND APPEARING OF CHRIST.

HEBREWS ix. 28. '*And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*'

Let us contemplate,

I. THE GLORIOUS APPEARANCE OF THE SON OF GOD.

The text informs us of

1. *Its certainty.* 'He *shall* appear,' &c.
2. *Its order.* '*The second* time,' &c.
3. *Its manner.* '*Without sin*,' &c.
4. *The end.* '*Unto salvation.*'

II. THE PERSONS WHO WILL BE HAPPILY INTERESTED IN IT. To those *who look* for him,

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1. *With ardent love.*
2. *With earnest longing.*
3. *With patient waiting.*
4. *With due preparation.*

From this subject permit me to make these remarks.

What a great distinction among mankind will there be at the judgment.

Of what importance is it for us to know whether we are thus looking for him.

In what high estimation should we hold that Saviour who is the first and the last in a sinner's salvation.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

JOHN IV. 28, 29. *'The woman then left her water-pot and went her way, into the city, and saith to the men, Come see a man which told me all things, whatever I did; is not this the Christ?'*

From the text and its connexion we shall draw the three following plain observations:

I. THAT JESUS CHRIST IS POSSESSED OF THE GREATEST EXCELLENCIES.

We shall confine ourselves to those illustrated in his conversation with the woman of Samaria.

1. *Profound humility.* Though he was rich in the glories of his divine nature, he humbled himself and became a man, and so as not to be above holding conversation with a poor woman at a well. Let proud mortals contemplate this and be ashamed.

2. *Consummate wisdom.* He proceeds upon the plan established by the order of the everlasting covenant, and will not fail of converting all his chosen people. He knew where to find this woman —he knew all her circumstances—and what kind of conversation to hold with her.

3. *Ardent benevolence.* It was for the instruction and conversion of this poor woman, that he exerted himself.

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II. THAT THOSE WHO ARE ENABLED TO DISCOVER HIS EXCELLENCIES FEEL AN ATTACHMENT TO HIM.

The affection of that soul which has by faith contemplated and discovered the excellencies of Christ, is,

1. *Reasonable.* (Rational)
2. *Fervent.*
3. *Influential.*

III. THAT THOSE WHO REALLY LOVE HIM ARE ANXIOUS TO RECOMMEND HIM TO OTHERS.

1. *By earnest entreaty.*
2. *By bringing them under the sound of the gospel.*
3. *By prayer to God for them.*
4. *By a holy life.*

IMPROVEMENT.

1. *We here see that there is no worthiness in the instrument employed in a sinner's conversion.*

The Samaritan woman was made useful in directing her fellow citizens to Christ.

2. *This subject affords us a test whereby we may try our own characters.*

Are we really attached to Christ?

3. *Are there any here desirous to see Jesus?*

No. III.

CHRIST AT EMMAUS.

LUKE XXIV. 32. '*And they said one to another, did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way and while he opened to us the scriptures?*'

The connexion of this text shews us, that after the death and resurrection of the great Messiah, two of the disconsolate disciples, who knew not that he was raised from the dead, went to a village called Emmaus; that on their way thither they

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conversed, as was likely they would do, upon the wonderful events that had lately transpired in Jerusalem, and spake of him they loved. His person —his actions—his sermons—his prophecies—and, above all, his most extraordinary exit occupied their solemn attention, and afforded a subject for the most interesting discourse. Whilst they were thus engaged in conversing about him, with whom they had before been familiar, and from whom they had learned most excellent lessons, a third came up and joined them; this indeed was Jesus of Nazareth, who had been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. But he chose, for wise ends, to conseal himself from them, and to cause that their eyes should be holden, that they should not know him, appearing to them as a stranger desirous of knowing the subject of their conversation, and the cause of their grief, and to sympathize with them under their sorrow—weeping with them that wept. They intimated to him their wonder that *he*, even supposing that he were but a stranger in Jerusalem, should be unacquainted with the things which were come to pass there in those days; then proceeding to tell him how Jesus, a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and the people, was condemned to death and crucified; giving him to understand at the same time, that the hopes they had entertained of him were most sanguine, for they trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel; and, finally, they informed him of some peculiar phenomena that had been witnessed by certain women of their acquaintance at his sepulchre, where his body could not be seen, though they saw a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. The courteous and mild fellow traveller then began to speak and detain them with delightful converse; for he shewed them 'that Christ ought to suffer these things, and then to enter into his glory.' He spread before them the mysteries of the inspired page, and shewed how they were il-

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lustrated in the life and death of their best friend. Sooner than they thought they arrived at their journey's end, where he made as though he would have gone further; but they prevailed on him, by their great importunity, to go in and tarry with them—with them he took bread, blessed it, brake it, and gave unto them—then first their eyes were opened to behold him as the same Jesus who was crucified, and to discover in him the lovely features of their Lord who had done all things well—when, lo! he vanished out of their sight, and was seen no more. —After which, we may reasonably suppose to have taken place—a solemn silence; and then they used to each other the admirable expression we have selected as a text—"Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Having, then, taken a slight glance at the whole account of this wonderful circumstance, in confining our attention more particularly to the words of the text, we shall view them as leading us to reflect on —the conversation of our Lord with his disciples —and the effects it produced upon their minds— "their hearts burned within them, while he talked with them by the way." Behold

(I.) The conversation of our Lord with his disciples.

And here the passage presents us with the kind familiarity which he displayed, and the lustre that he cast on the divine word—the first remarkable thing in our Lord's conversation with the travellers to Emmaus, is—

(1) The kind familiarity which he displayed—their own expression is, "He talketh with us by the way." It is condescension in the Son of God, to notice the concerns and accept the worship of his holy angels; how much more must it be so to sojourn with mankind—to go where they go—and freely to tell them the secrets of his heart. The Saviour was now, you remember, even on earth, a most dignified

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character—he was now no longer to suffer and be cruelly entreated—he had now finished the work his Father had given him to do—and had shortly after to ascend to claim his high seat in glory. He now shewed himself to be the Christ, the Son of God, and confirmed the reality of his appointment and mission, by his bursting the bars of the tomb. He would not now be viewed by any as a common character, but as the most wonderful being that had ever appeared in the world—as such even his enemies must consider him. Yet all this did not make him forget his friends, or cause him to lose any thing of that social and condescending disposition he had ever before manifested; but almost as soon as he was risen, he goes to meet some of the members of his little family, and confirm them further in himself. "He talked with them by the way."—Oh! what a heaven does Christ here by his example stamp upon Christian intercourse and sacred friendship.—Behold he talks with his disciples, proving to them that "as ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man's friend, by hearty counsel." And to this day we are permitted to converse with our God—"he talks with us by the way"—tells us our true character, and reveals his own excellence—he appears as our wonderful counsellor! and to whatever place we journey, we should be concerned to have him talking with us by the way.—The next remarkable circumstance in this conversation of our Lord, mentioned in the text, is

(2) The lustre that he cast upon the divine word. —"He talked with us by the way, and opened to us the scriptures." And well he might, for he told us before that "the Lord had given him the tongue of the learned; that he should know how to speak a word in season, to him that is weary." "He began," says the evangelist, "at Moses and all the prophets, and expounded to them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself"—blessed interpreter—divine teacher. We have no reason to

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suppose that he forgot the first promise that was made of him, even in the garden of Eden, that he should bruise the head of the serpent: no doubt but the intended sacrifice of Isaac, the patriarch's son —the erection of the brazen serpent on the pole— and the various sacrifices under the law, were all delightfully commented on by Jesus the Saviour. He did justice to all the passages—he shewed their full import—he gave them an insight into the meaning of all the prophecies respecting his death and glory—he took up every part of scripture in its bearing upon himself, he shewed [that he] was "all in all"—even in the Old Testament; and thus by his teachings they discovered far more of the beauty, harmony, and fulfilment of the word of God, than they ever did before, or ever would have done without his instruction. And does he not now give his people to understand the doctrines of his word—does he not now daily open to us the scriptures—has he not given to us his Holy Spirit in order to make us more wise in the mysteries of his kingdom,—and are we not directed to seek for him in the field of divine truth as for hid treasure. Oh! how much is there respecting Christ in this holy book, and who is so able to make us know it as himself—"he opens our understanding that we may understand the scriptures—he ever teaches his ministers to open and allege that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom we preach unto you is Christ,"—as he taught his apostles to testify the kingdom of God, persuading men concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening." Having then admired the conversation of our Lord with his disciples on the way to Emmaus, we notice

II—The effects it produced in their minds.

It was not at all probable that his discourse should be without effect, or fail deeply to interest their minds, since it was the very theme on which they chose to dwell; and it was conducted in so wise and

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endearing a manner—it was such that according to their own confession, it made their hearts to burn within them, while he talked with them by the way. —and surely I need not say this was not the glow of *shame*, lest they should be found in his company—. No, brethren, they would not have cared who of all the great men of the land had met them in company with this most intelligent stranger—they felt themselves highly honoured by his company, even before they knew his name. Nor was this the heat of *anger*, or of any bad passion excited by any thing that he delivered—his communications were sweet, and soothing. Had they been so disposed, they could find nothing in them that was improper, untrue, or provoking;—he talked with them as a man talks with his friend—the communion was sweet, and the intercourse highly gratifying; hence, though their hearts burned within them, it was neither with shame, nor anger. But this, brethren, permit me to say, was the glow of fixed surprise—of grateful feeling—of humble love, and—of holy animation of soul. Observe, it was the glow

(1) of fixed surprise.

They wondered much that he who appeared a stranger, not only to them, but also to the place where they were, should know so much about them —Jerusalem and Jesus; they were astonished at his wisdom—at his eloquence.—I almost fancy that they exclaimed "Never man spake like this man."— With emotions of amazement, they perceived that his "word was quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and that it is a discoverer of the thoughts and intents of the heart." With what prying eyes must they have looked upon him; and yet not so as to behold him who he was, because himself had prevented it; yet their hearts burned within them—sentiments of unutterable admiration were hid in their breasts whilst he opened to them the scriptures. Again—it was the glow

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(2) of grateful feeling.

They must have discovered that they were greatly indebted to this benevolent stranger, who had so effectually enlightened their judgments, and alleviated their sorrows. Their hearts burned within them with the sensation of thankfulness—they saw that he was a praise-worthy character, and, methinks, were devising some acknowledgments for his attention to them, little thinking that it was the Lord. Did your hearts ever glow in this way with a sense of your utter incapability of making any suitable returns to him that loved you, and revealed to you his will? For your fellowship with him, have you ever said—what shall I render to the Lord? Did you ever feel the high honour of being with Jesus—admitted into his presence, and being made partakers of his grace? All your hearts, Christians, should glow with gratitude, and burn with love. Hence, we remark again, their hearts burned within them with the sensation

(3) of humble love.

Finding as they did, that his words "were found of them, and they did eat them," and they were to them the joy and the rejoicing of their hearts, they manifested a strong attachment to him whom they supposed to be a new friend. He engaged their affections, hence they desired more of his company, and said, when their fears were excited lest he should depart from them—"Abide with us, for it is toward evening."—So do the hearts of the people of God burn within them to the present day, with like sensations, under similar enjoyments—the flame of divine love is kindled in their souls—the words of his mouth appear to them sweeter than the honey or the honeycomb;—his doctrine drops like the rain, and distils like the dew, and sensible that none teacheth like him, they admire and love him before all others. Oh! how excellent a thing it is thus to love the Saviour.—Let it be our happiness to sit at his feet; and with meekness receive the

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ingrafted word of truth, which is able to save the soul, so shall its admirable Author rise daily more and more in our esteem. Finally, it was the glow

(4) of holy animation of soul.

Divine light broke in upon their minds, and dispersed their remaining unbelief—they were elevated above the world to the contemplation of their adorable Redeemer. He touched their finest feelings—he filled their souls with the sublime joys of his salvation—he inspired them with pure devotion, and fixedness of heart—and while he led them to the consideration of Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, he prevented them from being weary and fainting in their minds. And oh! Christians, what sweet moments—rich in blessing—have you enjoyed, when in converse with Immanuel. "Whether in the body, or out of the body," you have hardly been able to tell;—drops of heaven have been bestowed upon you here below—the light of the Divine countenance has caused you to take your harp from the willows, and make every string speak to the praise of love divine. Did not your hearts burn within you? Were you not like Peter on the mount, who, in an extacy of joy said, "Lord it is good to be here?" You anticipated the joys of the blessed, you drank of the brook by the way, and seemed ready to depart and to be with Christ, to drink wine new with him, in the kingdom of his Father. This holy delight in God is real, and not enthusiastic—it is bestowed only on the new born heirs of grace, and it is given them as a pledge of joys to come—their hearts burn within them while he talks with them by the way.

In reflecting on this subject we are struck with the idea that

We often have to blame ourselves for not sufficiently estimating our mercies during the time of their continuance.

These disciples, notwithstanding the pleasure they had found in his society, did not, till just as he left

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them, discover him to be their Lord—to the present day Joseph often knows his brethren, whilst they know him not. And then afterwards they say—did not our hearts burn within us? True, they did. But why did not we value the blessing while we enjoyed it? Why did we not say, as the words of wisdom dropped from his mouth, it is the Lord?

Again, a review of past favours greatly supports the mind under present bereavements.

When we seem forsaken—when our affections towards Christ appear but cold, oh! what a privilege it is to be enabled to revert to a period when our hearts did burn within us, while he talked with us by the way. This thought cheers the drooping spirits, and raises the fainting head; it excites our hope too, that he will be with us again, and hold converse with us, even till the hour of death—yea, it makes us argue, that if the Lord had intended to destroy us, he would not have made our hearts burn within us by his divine communications.

It is the duty and interest of us all earnestly to pray for the society and conversation of Christ.

The blessing itself is so desirable, for it is to have the honour of dwelling and walking with Christ—and the sensations which he, by his discourse, excites in the mind, are so pleasing, and delightful, that we ought earnestly to beseech him to tarry with us—if he is an instructer and companion, how short will the distance to heaven appear, and how light and momentary the trials of the way—Lastly,

If those who travel with the Saviour, are thus blessed, how miserable are they who are altogether alienated from him.

Sinners, you never yet enjoyed the society of Christ, nor do you wish it. You are loading him with reproaches, and will have none of his counsel, and he will never say of you "they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy;" the fever of lust, and the torment of envy shall be your curse, while you live in the pains of hell, your portion after death,

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when you will burn in "the fire that never can be quenched, and the smoke of your torments shall ascend up forever and ever." Oh! may we, instead of this awful doom, be honoured and glorified with his constant presence in a better world—so shall the chosen of Nazareth be praised and adored by us forever and ever.

No. IV.

FAREWELL SERMON AT HOXTON.

Acts xx. 24. '*But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*'

This is not the language of stoical apathy; the man who uttered these words, my hearers, was a man possessed of the keenest sensibility—a man of real, honest, and exquisite feeling;—in his heart, cold indifference, and unfeeling stubbornness, had no place;—nor do the words express philosophical heroism; a foolish bravado; for our apostle derives his support from sources far different from these: he was animated by principles; he was delighted with prospects which the natural man never possesses; the power of which principles, and the view of which prospects, produce an effect which is mighty beyond all conception. The passage I have read you, introduces to our view Paul the preacher at the time of his departure from his friends, when his mind was led to expect, and prepared to meet, bonds and afflictions in every place; and the words of the text do most strikingly shew us the way in which the principles of the gospel discover themselves, and prove their power to strengthen and support. Viewing this passage as not unsuitable to the present opportunity, I shall exhibit it to your view, as shewing us

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that the principles of the gospel of Christ display their power and virtue

I. In rendering us insensible to the power of affliction—"none of these things move me."

II. In raising us superior to the love of life—"neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus." Let us behold here the glorious gospel of the blessed God. How the religion of Christ displays its potent influence—its mighty efficacy

I. In rendering us insensible to the power of affliction. Its supports enabled the holy zealous apostle to say of painful separation—of the labours of the ministry,—and of the large measure of persecution which in that age of the church every where attended the preachers of the gospel, "none of these things move me." Paul had, however, without doubt, the feelings of humanity; and, as I have already intimated, these things would affect his soul as a *man*, and occasionally overwhelm his spirits; but when he felt the happy influence of the gospel in all its power, he triumphed over these difficulties; he heroically conquered himself; subdued his own feelings, and appeared a ready, a joyful martyr for Christ. Thus did Paul, yet did not he, but the grace of God which was in him. These trials, then, these difficulties, which to many would be insurmountable, did not "move" him; that is, the anticipation of them, the endurance of them, did not so move him as to damp his *ardour*—as to discourage his soul, or as to make him wish to exchange with the world. Observe, they did not so move him

As to damp his ardour. These trials and apparent obstacles to the success of his work, and to his own happiness in it, did not make him less anxiously desirous of doing good in the world, did not at all diminish the fervent wishes of his soul to be the means of conducting many sons unto glory. Notwithstanding these difficulties, he was still "steadfast, unmov-

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able, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as he knew that his labour was not in vain in the Lord." And as he had this ministry, as he had received mercy, so he fainted not; hence he could say to others—no man should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we were appointed thereunto. He remembered the long cloud of witnesses, who through much tribulation had entered the kingdom, and he determined to imitate their example; he did more, he considered Jesus, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself; and this prevented him from being weary, or from fainting in his mind: he looked unto Jesus the author and finisher of his faith, and by that means obtained encouragement to proceed, and grace sufficient for him. Oh! never let the servants of the most high God relax in their endeavours to do good, or grow cold in their desires after the immortal welfare of mankind because some difficulties await them: of these difficulties they ought to say "none of these things move me." Nor did these trials so affect the apostle

As to discourage his soul; that is, to make him shrink at the thought of enduring them—to make him afraid to meet them—no—for, supported by the consolations of the gospel, he could welcome reproaches, pain and death; yea, rejoice and be exceeding glad that he was counted worthy to suffer for the sake of the Lord Jesus. 'What mean ye,' says he elsewhere, 'what mean ye to weep and to break mine heart, for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.' Divine grace so supported him, that though he was troubled on every side, he was not distressed; though perplexed, he was not in despair; though persecuted, he was not forsaken; though cast down, he was not destroyed. I suffer, says he, these things, nevertheless I am not shamed, 'for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, until that day.' Thus

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he could endure, and the Saviour enabled him to suffer as well as to preach for him, and none of these things moved him.

Finally, they did not so move him as to make him wish to exchange with the world.

Because he thus reckoned, that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that should be revealed in us. He saw that 'our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' He looked not at the things which are seen, which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen, which are eternal. There was a pleasure even connected with the sufferings which far excelled the joy of worldlings; hence he says 'I am filled with comfort; I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.' For the Lord stood by him and strengthened him; yea, the Lord delivered him from every evil work, and preserved him to his heavenly kingdom. The apostle, taught by the Spirit of God, loved even the difficulties of his Master's service far better than the ease and the pleasures of the world. Oh! that like him, we may wisely count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of this world—prefer even the worst, the most painful circumstances in the cause of the Saviour, to the most fascinating pleasures of the world—to the enjoyments which the men who know not God, reckon most valuable and most dear; thus shall we shew that we are willing to be any thing that the Saviour chooses, so that he may be glorified: thus shall we shew that we speak the feelings of our hearts, when we say of the difficulties of our work 'none of these things move me.' Thus was the apostle enabled to enjoy strong consolations in the midst of trials. Thus did Immanuel's grace quicken him to diligence and fortify his mind against the numerous ills that flesh is heir to. Oh! that the Spirit of glory and of God would rest or

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us also; that all our duties may be so discharged, and all our trials so endured, as that the power of the gospel may be evinced, and the supporting grace of the great Head of the Church abundantly magnified. And what can so teach us to endure trials as the religion of Christ? What supports have infidels, mere moralists, and speculative philosophers, like those which may be derived from the fulness of our Lord Jesus Christ? Theirs are refuges of lies, ours a never failing foundation. 'Their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.' The gospel of Christ presents the only sovereign balm for human wo; it supplies us with real, and with sure support; it emboldens us to say, in the face of difficulties, dangers, and death, 'None of these things move me.' The gospel, however, does not merely display its power in rendering us insensible to the power of affliction, but

(II) In raising us superior to the love of life.

For, adds the apostle, 'neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy.' 'Skin for skin, yea all that a man hath, will he give for his life.' The preservation of life is the first law of nature. That man is unworthy the character of a rational being, who intentionally shortens, or daringly terminates his own life. And yet here a man comes forward and says, 'neither count I my life dear unto myself'—and he is taught to form this estimation of life too, by the gospel of Jesus! How is this? The apostle did not choose strangling rather than life; but the case may be stated thus. The gospel taught him the right use of life, and made him earnestly to desire to fulfil it: the gospel taught him as a minister, that life was only valuable to him so far as he accomplished its purposes—the joyful completion of his Christian race, the honourable close of his ministerial exertions. Further than this, life was not dear to him, or highly prized by him, for he was wil-

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ling to be 'absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.' His earnest expectation and his hope was, that in nothing he should be ashamed, but that 'with all boldness, as always, so now Christ should be magnified in his body, whether it were by life or by death.' 'Yea,' says he, 'and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.' Oh! what a noble principle is this that renders a man willing to suffer and to die for Christ, 'for herein perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren.' And now it is said of the apostle, and all who like him triumphed over Satan, 'they were faithful unto death.' They overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, for they loved not their lives unto death. But I digress from the subject. Observe, then, that the gospel raised the mind of Paul superior to the love of life, as it shewed him that it was only useful for two purposes:

(I) That he might joyfully complete his Christian race. So he says, 'that I may finish my course with joy.' The course to which he alludes is the Christian race, which he had some time before undertaken in divine strength. God had called him so to run, that he might obtain, and hence he 'laid aside every weight, and the sin which so easily beset him, and ran with patience the race set before him, looking unto Jesus.' He set out with a full determination never to grow weary, or to decline his eager pursuit after glory, honour and immortality. Hitherto he had pursued it with alacrity; he did not count himself to have apprehended; but this one thing he did, forgetting those things which were behind, and reaching forth unto those things which were before, he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Personal religion had flourished in his soul, and he had not left the path marked out for him, by the great Forerunner, to be led aside either to the right hand or to the left, and now

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he wished to finish it with joy, and that man finishes his course with joy when he expresses gratitude for any ardour he has discovered in it, and when he has a full view of the crown of glory, and prospect of eternal rest. To finish our course with joy, we must express our gratitude for the assistance grace has offered us in it. [When a Christian can say, through the good hand of my God upon me, the care of his love, and the animation of his grace, 'I have finished my course.'] Oh! what pleasure it must afford a believer who completes his race on earth, to look back upon the path he has trod, and to remember even the trials he endured, and to bless God that he was enabled to persevere to the end. The Christian race cannot be joyfully completed without a bright prospect of eternal glory and a splendid crown. The man finished this race with joy who could say, 'henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me in that day.' Let others run to obtain a corruptible crown, we do it for an incorruptible. And oh! that when we finish our course it may be with this firm persuasion, that we shall enter into the joy of our Lord, where toil and fatigue will be known no more. For this purpose life is of use, as it conducts us to the end of the Christian race. But the apostle views himself not only as a Christian but as a minister of the New Testament, and therefore he views life as desirable

(2) That he might honourably close his ministerial exertions. That I may finish, says he, my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus. Here you behold the author of the gifts and the graces of ministers 'the Lord Jesus.' The Lord had said of Paul, 'he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name unto the Gentiles.' And he had received his ministry of the Lord Jesus. The subjects of his ministry came from him, for he taught him to preach human

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depravity—the atonement of Christ, and the influence of the Spirit, and to be witness unto all, for Jesus, of what he had seen and heard. His call to the ministry was from the Lord Jesus. He told him to publish the gospel, and immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood. He was an apostle not of man, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father. His qualifications for the ministry came from the Lord Jesus—he gave him a freedom of speech—he made him apt to teach—he furnished him with wisdom and knowledge—he made him a minister that needed not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. His success in the ministry was from the Lord Jesus—he made him fruitful, and he made him useful—he opened the hearts of his hearers—he attended his message with the power of his Spirit—he gave testimony to the word of his grace. Thus he assisted him in his work—owned him as an honoured servant, nor suffered him to labour in vain, or spend his strength for nought. Now, he wishes to close this ministry with joy. He does not want to leave it—to quit it for worldly ease; but to go on in it to the end of his life. He does not wish to grow weary in well doing; but to persevere to the last; and thus finishing his work, he would do it with joy, as he would review instances of usefulness, and behold the grace of the Lord of the harvest, in raising up more labourers to enter into his vineyard. A minister closes his work with joy, when he reviews instances of usefulness, when he knows that there are many whom he may view as his joy and crown of rejoicing—that he shall have to say of a goodly number, here am I, Father, and the children which thou hast given me. Thus our Lord rejoiced at the close of his labours, saying, 'I have given them thy word—I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' So also does the good minister finish his course with joy, when he beholds other labourers crowned with

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success in the vineyard—when he dies with the full confidence that Zion's glory increases, and that the work of the Lord is promoted. He rejoices that others shall enter into his labours, and that by their exertions, the Saviour will be honoured when he is cold in dust. Thus he rejoices, that instead of the fathers, he raises up the children, and that the Saviour's name shall be known to all generations. Happy man; like Simeon, thou shalt depart in peace—like him, thou shalt have the Saviour enclosed in thine arms, and eternal glory full in thy view.

Let those of us who are aged in the ministry imitate the apostle's example.

Students be diligent—honour Christ, and the Holy Spirit—aim sincerely to do good—be not afraid of difficulties—let us go on, &c. &c.

In so doing, we shall both save ourselves and those that hear us. Amen.

No. V.

ADDRESS AT LAYING THE FOUNDATION-STONE OF THE NEW CHAPEL.

'*And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house.*' So said the patriarch Jacob on a memorable occasion, and so may we say, assembled as we are to lay the foundation-stone of an edifice to God. We have found out a place for the Lord—an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob: beholding this spot of ground on this interesting morning, a thousand delightful sensations pervade our souls, and we are ready to anticipate the presence of the Great Eternal in this place, for 'is not this the hill which God hath chosen to dwell in it forever?' Let us please ourselves with believing, that here holy incense shall ascend to God—that from this place the voice of prayer and praise shall rise tuneful to the

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court of heaven—that here pious men shall enjoy the sublime happiness of devotion—that here the ungodly and the sinner shall be induced to begin their lives anew. How often may many have to say, on the very ground we tread, 'How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven.' The master of worshipping assemblies, Jehovah, by whose call congregations assemble, and by whose blessing their souls are benefitted, may here afford his watchful care, his animating smiles: we have every reason to believe he will do it, entreated by the earnest and fervent supplications of the men he loves; himself inclined to bless the gates of Zion, his eyes and his heart shall be here perpetually; with pleasure will he behold the favoured spot; and in the liberality of his heart afford to his assembled saints an earnest, a foretaste, a lively representation of what those happy spirits know and feel who are ever with the Lord.

We flatter ourselves, that the erection of an edifice like this is the effect of benevolent feeling to mankind, and an ardent love to the Great Lord of all. We unite in endeavouring to maintain the honour of the Saviour's name, and to support the glory of his cross. We feel, and deeply too, the necessity of possessing somewhat more than this earth can afford; we regard men as immortals, and we know that there are blessings, without the enjoyment of which, those souls will experience continued disappointment here, and will languish forever in another world. These necessary and holy blessings, the Eternal has chosen to communicate by the instrumentality of a preached gospel. We know that Jehovah, in making up the number of his elect, works by means; therefore it is that we endeavour to bring that gospel, the report of which is indeed a joyful sound, to the ears of mankind, praying that the blessed Spirit would send it to their hear
The erection of this place is a direct attack again...
—against whom? say my hearers, alarmed at the

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idea of hostility—against the Church of England? No! God forbid; the very reverse of all this. We cheerfully take the present opportunity of informing this numerous auditory, that the doctrines which will be proclaimed on this ground will exactly correspond, will be just the same, with those contained in the doctrinal articles of the Church of England, which are the bulwarks of its faith, and may be read in most of the Books of Common Prayer. Is it, then, you ask again, an attack against any other congregation, or body of professing Christians? My soul revolts and spurns at the idea; for in the cause of Immanuel we wish cordially and constantly to unite with all those who believe in the Lord Jesus, both theirs and ours. But in one word, this is an attack directed against the kingdom of Satan, and the prince of darkness. Its object is the translation of our fellow creatures from his hateful power and dominion, and their transition into the family of the blessed household of their Redeemer. With the sword of the Spirit we wish to combat the old serpent the devil. In this large and populous town he has maintained his seat, he has reigned and triumphed: we long to see him fall, like lightning from heaven; and hence we preach that glorious gospel, which opposes his works, which rescues from his power, which gives us to expect a final triumph over him and his followers.

Here we expect that the preaching of the cross will be heard—that self-righteousness will in no shape meet with encouragement—that man will be represented as nothing, and Christ as all in all. We erect no altar to an unknown God, but are boldly confessing, that we wish every day to approach the Father of spirits, through the mediation of God our Saviour, and all this by the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit. And are any of us so hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin, as not to wish that here many souls may be born to God—may be trained up for heaven; or shall we not, at the last great day, re-

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joice to see a goodly company of men, who on this spot shall have met with the Saviour Jesus, and commenced an honourable path to heaven. We rejoice in the thought, that the cause is God's, and must prevail, and with pleasure we celebrate the growing empire of our King. His church must flourish, because it is purchased with his blood, and preserved by his grace. The names of the several denominations among which it is scatterd may be lost and forgotten, but its numbers shall increase, and its honours spread to the end of time.

The Episcopalian church may totter to the ground; the Presbyterian church may be known no more; the Independent church may no longer exist as a separate body; but the *true* church, made up of many of all these, and confined to no one of them, shall increase yet more and more, and ever be acknowledged the Zion of the Lord, the city of the Holy One of Israel.

This morning have we cause for gratitude, that amidst the spread of infidelity, and a vain philosophy, the work of God is not forgotten; that still his churches rise and flourish; that still souls are born to God, and the saints shout aloud for joy. In the sanctuaries where we worship, we have the solace of our cares, a kind refreshment afforded us in our journey to heaven, and new light and joy bestowed. May all this be known amongst us—be known by posterity when we are cold in death.

I cannot lose sight of the opportunity which this morning affords me, of assuring this large and mixed assembly, that real religion is a personal thing; that the gospel we preach must be believed, and its consolations enjoyed, or there remains for us no hope of pardon or of peace. My fellow immortals you have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God: but we exhibit to you a blessed and perfect Redeemer! Believe in him, and you shall not be confounded world without end. And when I meet you in an assembly, far larger and more solemn than this, I mean

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at the judgment day, you shall be accepted of him; yea, believing in him, you shall then enter a temple, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; and forever adore the hand that formed it, the grace that conducted us to it, and the Saviour who fills it with his glory. Amen.*

On Wednesday, May 29, 1812, the Chapel was solemnly dedicated to God. On this interesting occasion, the Rev. P. S. Charrier, of Bethesda chapel, Liverpool, commenced the morning service by reading a suitable portion of scripture, and offering up a solemn and appropriate prayer. The Rev. William Jay, of Bath, delivered a sermon from Psalm cxxii. 6, '*They shall prosper that love thee.*' The Rev. Mr. Lister, of Lime-street chapel, concluded by prayer. In the evening, the service was opened by reading of the scriptures and prayer, by the Rev. Jos. Fletcher, A. M. of Blackburn. The Rev. Dr. Collyer, of Peckham, preached from 1 John iv. 8. '*God is love.*' The Rev. Mr. Kershaw, of Edinburgh, concluded by prayer.

* This is evidently but a rude outline of what was delivered on that interesting occasion. The effect produced upon the immense auditory which he addressed was remarkably strong—and every effect must have an adequate cause.

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No. VI.

MR. SPENCER'S ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS PROPOSED TO HIM, AT HIS ORDINATION.

What motives have induced you to enter upon the important work of the Christian Ministry?

As the religion of the Bible appears in my estimation the best blessing Jehovah has bestowed upon the world, I, from the humble hope that it has shed its influence on my own heart, am impressed with an earnest wish to be the instrument of conveying its holy advantages to my fellow-immortals! I say from the hope that I am interested in its blessings; for in no one sentiment am I more fully established, than that the ministers of God should be men of God; that personal religion is a most indispensable requisite in all who grasp at the honour of being the servants of Christ and his churches. That it has pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, to call me by his grace, and reveal his Son in me, I am led to *hope*, or I dare not think of the Christian ministry! From my earliest infancy, having been blessed with a religious education, my mind was powerfully impressed with the solemnities of death and judgment; and often have such impressions been the means of drawing me to earnest secret prayer, at a very early period of my existence. Yet did I, as I advanced in age and stature, give proofs, awfully evident, frequently *since* distressing to my mind, of the dreadful depravity of my nature, and of the necessity of that great change, which I then accurately judged had not really passed on my soul. But God remembered me in mercy! The Holy Spirit made use of the preaching of the gospel at Hertford by various ministers of our own denomination, as also by several in the connexion of the late Countess of Huntingdon, to enlighten my mind in the knowledge of him; gradually he drew me to himself; and, I trust, imparted to me, for my best treasure, his *love* in my heart, the salvation of Christ, with its attendant blessings. Viewing myself, then, as a young sinner, blest with special favours, I determined I would not live to myself, but to Him who I believed had loved me, and given himself for me. I cast myself upon his care; I implored his direction as to my future steps; I longed to be engaged in the holy ministry, yet God is my record that I trembled at the idea of rushing into his service; of assuming, with daring temerity, a character I was so unfit to bear. I resolved that I would wait for the direction of his providence, and then go on in his strength. Christian friends urged me to devote myself to the work of the Lord; my own

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mind eagerly seconded their proposals; yet the consideration of my youth, and the dread that I was unprepared for the employment, held me back from the attempt, till after a little while my acquaintance with Mr. Thomas Wilson commenced: encouraged by him in the hope that I might be a labourer for God, I commenced preparatory studies for the ministry, under the direction of my honoured friend, the Rev. William Hordle, of Harwich, and, recommended by him, entered the seminary at Hoxton. Thus, Sir, a persuasion of the great importance of the preaching of the gospel, a consciousness that God had imparted to me that *tone* of mind which seemed adapted to the employment, the earnest wishes of intelligent and useful Christians, the clear and evident direction of divine Providence, and, I hope, the glow of zeal for the honour of our glorious Redeemer and the good of man, united together to direct my [coming] to the ministry of the word.

Why do you choose to exercise your Ministry among Protestant Dissenters?

The close alliance of the church [of England with the] state, were there no other argument against it, would be enough to influence my mind in refusing to enter within its pale. But my conscience also objects to many of the terms of communion it imposes, and its acknowledgment of a human head; to several of its prescribed ceremonies, which appear to me unlike the simplicity that is in Christ, and very unnatural characteristics of a kingdom which cannot be of this world. Yet, while these are my decided sentiments, I shall always respect and love the zealous followers of the Lamb, whom Heaven acknowledges, as his friends among the members of the established church. May grace, mercy, and peace, ever be with them; may the work of God succed among them. From all that I can collect from the New Testament, it appears obvious to me, that all that is meant by a church of Christ, is a company of faithful men determining to unite together in his faith and service—bowing to his directions—submissively yielding themselves up to him—and resolving to walk in all his ordinances and commandments, blameless! These churches are, I believe, to be found among those of the congregational order, and therefore I am united to them.

What are the principal topics on which you mean to insist in your future ministrations?

My earnest ambition, Sir, is to declare the *whole counsel* of God, and to give to every one his portion of meat in due season. In order that this may be effectually done, I know that the

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Mediator's excellencies must be particularly displayed, and the glories of the cross largely insisted on. I intend, Sir, in humble dependence on the strength of Christ, without regarding either the smiles or the frowns of man, to endeavour to approve myself the faithful servant of God. In my discourses, Christ shall be all in all. His person, work, and great salvation, shall be constantly exhibited in their bearings, upon every part of the scheme of religion I have beheld in the Bible, and admired. The solemn truth, that man is totally depraved, and altogether defiled by sin; the necessity of regeneration; the suitableness of the atonement our Lord has made; the nature and blessedness of the influences of the Holy Spirit; the various consolations and directions contained in the gospel of Christ, shall all be illustrated and discussed in my ministry, according to the ability Jehovah shall bestow. The doctrines of grace shall maintain a high precedence in all my ministrations: yet will I, with the most industrious care, labour to shew that they are doctrines according to *godliness*. The holiness of the religion of Christ shall be enfored from every subject. Thus will I labour to secure the approbation of God, to preserve an honest and good conscience, to promote the glory of the great and precious Redeemer of sinners, and to win souls to Christ. The terrors of the Lord shall be declared to the ungodly; the sure support of our covenant Lord shall be preached to the faithful; and *Christ* shall be preached to all.

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

I do, Sir, with pleasure, in the presence of this congregation, deliver to you the sentiments I hold dear to my heart, and those views of the truth as it is in Jesus; which, having imbibed myself, I intend to communicate to my fellow men. The sentiments I hold, I trace up to their source when I mention the Bible, the book of God, which holy volume, attested by every evidence that consistency, dignity, purity, miracles and divine effects can afford, I receive as the standard of truth, as God's revelation of his own mind and will to men. Regarding the Bible, then, as able to make us wise unto salvation, I receive as positive and important truths, all that it teaches concerning God, the world, salvation, heaven and hell. I believe, then, from the testimony of divine truth, that God is a spirit, holy, infinite, unchangeable, and perfect in all the attributes of deity. That in the *Godhead*, there are *three* divine and glorious persons, equal in power and honour—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This sublime mystery I dare not attempt to explain; because I know, that we cannot by searching find out God, nor trace the Almighty to perfectio

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Yet do I most cordially receive the fact, admiring the various parts each of them has undertaken in the economy of our salvation, and adoring a *triune* God as the proper object of Christian worship. I believe that Jehovah's omniscience foresaw from all eternity all the events that should take place in the universe, and that he orders all things after the counsel of his own will. I believe that his almighty power created all the things that do appear, and still supports and upholds them in the state of existence in which he has wisely placed them. I believe that the persons in the Godhead did, foreseeing the fall and ruin of Adam and his posterity, enter into a covenant engagement with each other, that through their grace, the lost rebel might be restored to divine favour and friendship, and to communion with the whole Trinity. In this covenant, I believe all the blessings of grace are deposited for all the faithful; Christ is its surety. He has made that atonement this covenant secured, and the blessed Spirit communicates the happy effects of it to the souls of all good men. It was by virtue of the arrangement of this covenant that Christ appeared once in the end of time, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Gradual discoveries of his glory have been made to the Jewish church; but at length he came to redeem Jacob, to ransom him out of the hand of him that was stronger than he. By his sufferings, his obedience unto death, and the whole of his mediatorial work, I believe he has purchased the church; redeemed and saved the goodly company of men, who by the Eternal Father were for this purpose given into his hands before time began. And having on earth finished the work given him to do, I believe that he ascended to glory, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and ever liveth to make intercession for sinners, that their corruptions may be purified, their graces may be matured, and they be finally with him, where he is, to behold his glory. I believe that the Holy Spirit works on the human mind, when the time, the set time, to favour the individual, is come; that he affects the heart with compunction for sin; that by the instrumentality of the gospel, he calls the sinner out of darkness into marvellous light; that by the influence of divine truth, he sanctifies the soul; that by the application of the promises of scripture, and by his own internal witness, he gives strong consolation to the heirs of God, for such I consider those whom he has convinced of sin, and led to Jesus; called, enlightened, sealed, and established, they give evidence of a divine work upon their souls, by appearing in the beauties of holiness; by adorning the doctrine of God, their Saviour, in all things; such characters I believe that Jehovah views as his church on earth; his family, below, only separated by death from the blest society above; and for their

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sakes all nature stands; to promote their present and eternal happiness, the gospel was published in the world; ministers have been commissioned to serve the Lord, and qualified for the office; separate churches have been raised; the ordinances of Christ's appointment, viz. the Lord's supper administered to believers in Jesus; and Baptism, designed for those who from heathen countries were proselyted to the Christian faith, and for all the infants of believers—have been preserved amongst us. In their hearts, the fruits of grace must abound; they must walk with God, and be conformed to the divine image. Such characters must, I believe, endure to the end, and be saved; their perseverance, I consider as resting on the power of God, on the nature of the covenant—Divine faithfulness, and the very tendency of the principles of grace. I consider justification from sin; the pardon of every offence; the gradual sanctification of the soul, and its preparation for heaven, as all blessings of grace, freely bestowed upon the unworthy; obtained without money and without price. I view the preaching of the gospel as God's appointed means for the translation of sinners from darkness to light, and for the edification of his mystical body, the church, by the exhibition of Christ crucified, it had pleased God to save them that believe.

Through the grace of God, every humble believer will, I know, eventually appear before the Saviour in glory everlasting. To that state of joy and felicity, I believe all real Christians to be daily tending; and am happily persuaded, from the testimony of God, that those who serve him here shall reign with him above. Hence the spirit of a good man, when it is separated from the body, is by its beloved Saviour, received to the final dwelling of the just, where it waits for the time appointed for the trumpet to sound, and the dead to be raised, to be again united to the body, then glorified, and made like the body of the Redeemer.

I anticipate, Sir, the last judgment—I believe that God is coming to vindicate the right of his own government; to declare the equity of his holy providence, at which we have in our ignorance often murmured; to banish the impenitent, the unholy, and all who would not obey the gospel, into torments, more awful than we can ever imagine, and lasting as the existence of the soul. On that day, Sir, I believe that we shall give an account of ourselves unto God, and if found clothed in the Mediator's righteousness, we shall be declared approved of God, and welcomed to the joys of heaven. This, Sir, is the outline of what I conceive to be the faith delivered to the saints; these are the fixed principles I have cordially received myself, and intend to make known to others. Oh! that my faith in them may be operative and influential, in

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supporting my mind under the severe, sharp trials, with which my Father in heaven has thought fit to exercise me; and may I be enabled, in simplicity and godly sincerity, to declare these truths to the people of my charge.

In the presence of God, then, his holy angels, those his servants in the ministry, and this assembled congregation, I resign myself, my body and soul, my ministry, my all, to the care and protection of the Great Head of the Church.

'The Lord God of my fathers be with me, as he was with them: let him not leave me, nor forsake me.' And I most earnestly and humbly request the prayers of my own congregation, of my brethren and fathers in the ministry, and of all who witness these solemnities, that God would enable me to fulfil the duties of my sphere, that he would ever preserve me from backsliding in religion, that he would fix my wayward heart, and preserve it alive to God; that the ministry be not blamed.

I do solemnly determine, as far as in me lies, to live to his glory; to set a watch over my temper, speech and deportment, that they may not disgrace the gospel of Christ. I purpose, relying on the all-sufficient grace of the Master whom I serve, that I will be instant in season and out of season; that I will reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering; that I will labour as for God, and as in the immediate prospect of eternity. May he assist me to instruct the ignorant—to cheer and direct the sick and the dying—to influence the young to rise and follow Christ—and to do real and extensive good in this large and populous town; and when I have done the labours allotted for me below, after having spent a holy and an useful life—oh! may I but hear the Lord say, 'well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord.' Amen.

FINIS.

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